

SHE SEIZED A SMALL DESSERT KNIFE, AND, ALMOST MAD WITH RAGE,  
STABBED HIM RIGHT IN THE HOLLOW OF HIS NECK.

# The Wandering Life And Short Stories

BY  
GUY DE MAUPASSANT

TRANSLATIONS AND CRITICAL AND INTERPRETATIVE ESSAYS BY

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## THE WANDERING LIFE

### CHAPTER I

#### WEARINESS



LEFT Paris, and France, too, on account of the Eiffel Tower.

It could not only be seen from all over, but it could be found everywhere, made of all sorts of known matter, exhibited in all the shops and show windows, an inevitable and racking nightmare.

It was not the only thing, though, that created in me an irresistible desire to be alone for a while, but everything that has been made in and over it, and even around it.

How can the newspapers have dared to speak of "new architecture," and refer to this metallic skeleton? Architecture, to-day the least understood and most forgotten of all the arts, is, perhaps, also the most esthetic, mysterious, and richest in ideas of them all.

Throughout the ages, it has had the privilege to symbolize, so to speak, each epoch; to represent, by means of a very small number of typical monu-

ments, the manner of thinking, feeling, and dreaming of a race and a civilization.

A few temples and churches, palaces and castles, contain almost all the history of art in this world, conveying to our eyes better than books, by the harmony of their lines and the charm of their ornamentation, all the beauty and grandeur of an epoch.

I should like to know what will be thought of our generation, if some riot does not soon make this high and lanky pyramid of iron ladders crumble—that ugly, gigantic skeleton, whose base seems to have been constructed to support a formidable monument of Cyclops, only to taper into a ridiculously thin profile like that of a factory chimney.

It is a problem that has been solved, people say. That is granted—although it might be said the whole discussion was of no use; but then I prefer the old idea of the ancient architects, of making again the naïve attempt of the Tower of Babel, just as those of the Campanile of Pisa did in the twelfth century.

The idea of constructing this graceful tower of eight stories of marble columns, tilting a little, as if it were about to fall sidewise, of proving to stupefied posterity that the center of gravity is nothing but a useless creation of certain engineers, and that monuments can be built without bothering about it, and still be charming and attract more surprised visitors, after seven centuries' existence, than the Eiffel Tower will in seven months—constitutes a problem (since problem there must be) which is more original than that of that gigantic kettle smeared with paint, only fit to please the eye of an Indian.

Yes, I know that a certain version would have it that the Campanile bent itself alone. Who knows? The pretty edifice keeps its secret, still discussed, and still unsolved.

But what do I care about the Eiffel Tower? It was only the lighthouse of an international Kermess, according to the consecrated expression, the remembrance of which will haunt me like a nightmare.

Far be it from my mind to criticise this great political enterprise, the World's Fair, that showed the universe, just at the right moment, the strength, vitality, activity, and inexhaustible richness of this surprising country—France.

Great pleasure and a great example, as well as much diversion, were given to the people and the middle classes. They were highly satisfied, and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content.

But I merely decided from the very first that I was not made to appreciate such diversions.

After visiting, with a sense of profound admiration, the section devoted to the display of machinery, the fantastic discoveries of science, mechanics, physics, and modern chemistry; after satisfying myself that the Arabian dances are charming only when performed in their original setting, I remarked to myself that the fair would be an interesting place to go to once in a while, provided one could rest from the fatigue of it all at one's own home or at some friend's.

But I never had had any idea of what Paris could become, when invaded by the universe.

From the early break of day, the crowded streets resemble swollen currents. Every one is going to or coming back from the exposition, or returning



to it. In the street carriages make up a long line, that gives one the impression of an endless train. Not one is free, and there is not a coachman who will drive you to another place than the fair, or to his stable, when he is going to change horses. Not a cab at the clubs. They are all working for the strangers; not a table at the restaurants, and not a friend who dines at home or who will consent to dine at your house.

When you invite him, he accepts on condition that the dinner shall take place on the Eiffel Tower. It's more jolly! And they all, as if it were the password, invite you there every day of the week, either to have luncheon or dinner.

In this heat, dust, stench, perspiring crowd, greasy bits of flying paper, odor of delicatessen goods and spilled wine, breaths of three hundred thousand mouths, in the contact and friction with this overheated mass of flesh, this mixed sweat of all these different races, sowing their fleas, as it were, on the benches and in all the alleys—I thought it natural that one might, through curiosity, once or twice, try the far from good cooking of these aërial restaurants; but I could not help being stupefied, when I saw certain people dine every evening amid this filth and crowd, as did the members of good society of the delicate class, the *élite*, who ordinarily affect to be nauseated before the common workman who exhales the odor of physical labor.

This proves definitely that the triumph of democracy is complete.

There are no more castes, races, or aristocratic epidermis. We have now only two classes, the rich and the poor. There is no other classification to differentiate the degrees of modern society.

An aristocracy of another order is establishing itself, whose triumph was unanimous at the exposition; the aristocracy of science, or, rather, of scientific industry.

As for the arts, they are disappearing; the very instinct of art is dying out in the *élite* of the nation, that suffered, without protesting, the construction of certain buildings of the most disgustingly ugly kind.

The modern Italian taste is dominating us, and the contagion is such that the spots reserved for artists, in this great, popular, and *bourgeois* bazaar, gave one the impression of a huge country circus or advertising show.

I should not protest against the reign of the scientists, if the nature of their work and their discoveries did not constrain me to notice that they are, above all, commercial experimenters.

It is not their fault, perhaps. But it looks as if the run of the human thought is dammed between two walls, that never will be overrun: industry and sale.

In the beginning of the many civilizations, man's soul had recourse to art. One would think that a jealous divinity said to him: "I forbid you to think of those things. Just concern yourself about your material life, like an animal, and I shall cause you to make a myriad of discoveries."

And, in fact, to-day the powerfully seducing emotion of the artistic centuries seems to be dead, while minds of another bent are awakening to invent machines of all kinds and surprising instruments, or to combine substances, and thereby obtain wonderfully stupefying results. And all that to supply the physical wants of man, or to kill him.



The ideal conceptions, such as those of pure and disinterested science, or those of Galileo, Newton, and Pascal, seem absent in us, while our imagination appears more and more easily excited by the desire of searching for discoveries useful to our existence.

But does not the genius of the one who, with one grand leap of his mind, jumped from the fall of an apple to the great law that reigns over this whole universe seem born of a more divine germ than that of the sharp American inventor, the marvelous manufacturer of bells, megaphones, and lightning apparatus?

Is not that the secret vice of the modern mind, the sign of its inferiority in its triumph?

I may be entirely wrong. At all events, these things which interest us to-day in a practical way do not absorb us as do the ancient forms of thought, for we are far too much the poor, irritable slaves of a dream of delicate beauty that haunts and spoils our lives.

I felt that it would be very pleasant to revisit Florence, so immediately resolved to do so.



## CHAPTER II

### NIGHT



ALTHOUGH out of the port of Cannes since three o'clock in the morning, we could still feel the breezes wafted from the land during the night. Then a slight breath of sea air came to push our yacht, covered with sails, toward the Italian coast.

It is a boat of twenty tons, painted white, with an imperceptible golden thread surrounding it, just as a girdle would encircle a swan. Its sails of brand-new canvas, under the rays of an August sun, throwing flames on the water, look like the silky wings of a bird against the blue sky. The jibsails, light triangles, rounded out by a breath of wind, stretch themselves outward, and the mainsail is slack under its fifty-four-foot peak, which points upward like an arrow; the mizzensail, at the stern of the boat, flaps in a sleepy way.

Soon every one is dozing on the deck. It is a

typical summer afternoon on the Mediterranean Sea. The wind has died away; the fierce sun fills the sky and turns the sea into a soft bluish sheet, motionless and without a ripple, asleep, as it were, under a glittering, misty dawn, that gives one the impression of being the water's perspiration.

Notwithstanding the awnings which I had put up to protect me from the sun, the heat is so great that I am forced to go below and rest on a divan.

It is always cool inside. The yacht is of deep draught, built to navigate in the northern seas and to resist rough weather. A crew and six passengers, or seven, possibly, can live comfortably in this floating abode, and eight can sit at dinner in the little dining-room.

The interior is finished in varnished pine, framed with teakwood, brightened by the brass of the locks, hinges, and chandeliers, all the gay yellow brasses that belong to the luxury of yachts.

How strange this new change, after the clamor of Paris! I do not hear a sound now, not a sound. Every quarter of an hour, perhaps, the sailor at the helm, almost asleep, gives a slight cough, and the clock, hanging on the wall, makes a noise which seems formidable in this silence of the heavens and the sea.

And this ticking of the clock, which alone disturbs the quiet of the elements, gives me the wonderful sensation of the endless solitudes, where the murmurs of the worlds, hushed at only a few yards above their surfaces, are imperceptible in the silence of the universe.

It seems as if something of this eternal calm of space comes down and spreads itself over the motionless sea on this stifling hot day. It is oppres-

sive, soporific, annihilating, like the contact with the infinite vacuum. The will surrenders, thought stops, and sleep takes hold of both body and soul.

Night was approaching when I awoke. A few breaths of twilight breeze, hardly hoped for, swept us along until the sun went down.

We were very near the coast, in sight of the city of San Remo, but there was no hope of reaching it that night. Other villages or small towns were spread at the foot of the high gray mountain and looked like packs of white linen put out to dry on the beach. A few vapors smoked, as it were, on the slopes of the Alps, hiding the valleys in their rise toward the mountain crests that made a beautifully dented line against a rose-and-lilac sky.

Night came upon us; the mountains disappeared, and fires were lighted on the water's edge all along the coast.

A delicious odor of cooking, coming from the interior of the yacht, mingled agreeably with the salt sea air.

After dinner I lay at full length on deck. This quiet day of drifting had wiped out all there was in my mind as a sponge clears a tarnished glass; and memories crowded upon my thoughts, memories of the life I had left behind me, of people I knew well, had observed, or loved.

Nothing makes the mind travel and the imagination wander like being alone at sea, under the sky, on a hot night. I felt excited, vibrating in all my being, as if I had been drinking some rich wine, inhaling ether, or were still in the embrace of a beloved one.

The nocturnal coolness moistened my skin in a sort of imperceptible bath of salt-water vapor. The

slight shiver caused by the cooling air went through my limbs, entered my lungs, and body and soul were refreshed, almost beatified.

Are they more or less happy, those who experience sensations through the entire surface of their skin as perfectly as they do through the medium of their eyes, mouth, nostrils, or ears?

It is a rare and much-to-be-dreaded faculty, perhaps, this highly nervous and much diseased excitability of the epiderm which is communicated to all the organs and which creates certain emotions in the face of the simplest physical impressions, making one feel sorrowful and joyful according to the change of temperature, or to the fragrant odors emanating from the soil, or as the day is bright or gloomy.

To be unable to enter a theater, because the contact with the crowds affects in an inexplicable manner the entire organism; to be unable to go into a ballroom, because the fictitious gayety and the whirling motion of the waltzers irritate like an insult; to feel suddenly happy or melancholic, without any apparent good reason, according to the decorations or combinations of light in a room, and experience, by the grouping together of certain perceptions, an indefinable physical satisfaction which nothing can reveal to a person not possessing a truly delicate organism—is it a happiness or a misfortune?

I do not know; but if the nervous system is not sensitive to a point which reaches pain or ecstasy, it can only give us very ordinary sensations and vulgar gratifications.

This mist of the sea was like a caress, filling me with happiness. It spread very near under the heavens, and I watched with delight the stars envel-



oped in these gauzelike veils, looking somewhat paler in the dark firmament. The coast had now disappeared behind this vapor, which floated over the waters and surrounded the stars with a certain halo.

One would have thought that some supernatural hand had packed the earth in fleecy clouds, as if about to send it to some unknown destination.

Suddenly, through this snowy shadow, a sound of distant music, from an unknown source, came over the sea. I thought some aërial orchestra was hovering in space to give me a concert. The faint but clear sounds, possessing charming, sonorous tones, threw into the night a murmur of operatic music.

A voice spoke near me:

"Hum!" said the sailor, "it's Sunday, and there's music in the public park of San Remo."

I listened, so much surprised that I was afraid it was only a dream. I listened a long while, infinitely charmed, to the nocturnal music wafted by the breeze through space.

But now the sound swelled, became louder, and seemed to gallop toward us. It was so fantastic that I got up to listen. It was becoming more and more distinct, every sound, and was evidently approaching me; but how? Upon what phantom raft would it appear? It was coming nearer and nearer, but so rapidly that I peered into the darkness excitedly; and, next, as if by magic, I was bathed in a hot breeze, fragrant with aromatic plants, the strong perfume of the myrtle, the mint, and the citron, with lavender and thyme scorched on the mountain by the burning sun.

It was the land breeze which was about to rise, overcharged with the breath of the coast, and which

was carrying out to sea, intermingled with the odor of the Alpine plants, those wonderful harmonious strains of music.

I remained breathless, intoxicated with such delightful sensations that my troubled senses seemed to bring me to the verge of delirium. I really did not know whether I was breathing music, or hearing perfumes, or even sleeping up in the stars.

This breeze, impregnated with the perfume of the flowers, blew us out to sea, where it evaporated into the night. The sounds gradually died out as the ship moved on.

I could not sleep, and I wondered how a modern poet, of the so-called school of symbolism, would have explained the confused nervous vibration which I had just experienced, and which seems to me, in clear and plain language, untranslatable. No doubt, some of those poets who take such pains to give expression to the multifarious artistic sensitiveness of thought would have come out with honor, giving in euphonious rhymes, replete with intentional sonorousness, incomprehensible yet slightly perceptible, a fair description of this extraordinary blending of perfumed sounds, starry mist, and sweet land breeze, sowing music in the night air.

A sonnet from their patron, Baudelaire, came back to my mind:

"Nature is a temple where living columns  
Sometimes allow jumbled words to escape;  
Man walks through a forest of symbols  
That watch him with familiar looks.

"Like long-drawn echoes mingling in the distance,  
In a dark and deep unity  
As vast as night, as vast as light,  
Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other.

"There are perfumes as sweet as a child's lips,  
Sweet as a clarinet, green as the meadows,  
—And others, again, strong and overpowering,  
Having the breadth of infinite space,  
Like ambergris, musk, benzoin, and incense,  
Which exalt the enraptured mind and senses."

Had I not just felt the true meaning of this verse, to the very marrow of my bones:

"Perfumes, colors, and sounds answer each other."

And not only do they answer each other in nature, but within us, too, and lose themselves sometimes "in a dark and deep unity," as the poet says, by the repercussive pressure of one organ against another.

Medical science is fully aware of this. Many articles have been written on the subject, under the title of *Colored Audition*.

It has been proved that, in certain nervous and highstrung natures, when one sense receives a shock which affects it, the concussion of the impression is communicated, in the same manner as the ripples of a wave, to the other senses, each of which responds in its own peculiar way. This music in certain beings evokes visions of the different colors. It must then be a kind of sensitive contagion, transformed according to the normal action of each cerebral apparatus thus affected.

In this way can be explained the famous sonnet by Arthur Rimbaud, which speaks of the colors of the vowels, an article of faith which has been adopted by the school of symbolism:

"A, black; E, white; I, red; U, green; O, blue; vowels."

Is he right or wrong? As far as the man who breaks stones on the road, and many of our great men, too, are concerned, this poet is an impostor or



a fool. But, in the minds of others, he has discovered and expressed an absolute truth, though these explorers of minute perceptions must always differ a little in their opinions on the shades and the images that can be evoked in us by the mysterious vibrations of vowels or of music.

If it is recognized by the science of to-day that musical notes affecting certain organisms can arouse visions of colors; if *sol* can be red; *fa*, lilac or green, why could not these same sounds arouse tastes in the mouths and odors in the nostrils? Why should not fastidious though somewhat hysterical natures be affected by everything through the medium of every one of their senses, at the same time; and why, too, could not the symbolist reveal a delightful sensitiveness to those of their own sort, incurable and privileged poets that they are? This is more a question of artistic pathology than of estheticism pure and simple.

Is it not possible, however, that some of those interesting neurotic writers (neurotic by willful training) have reached such a degree of excitability that every impression received creates in them a concerted action of all the perceptive faculties?

And is that not the very thing which their poetry of sounds, apparently unintelligible, tries to express when it sings the whole gamut of sensations, and attracts one's attention by the grouping of words more according to their rational qualities of harmony than their recognized signification to untranslatable meanings, which are obscure to us but clear to them?

For artists have come to an end of their resources; nothing is unpublished, unknown, either in the manner of expression or in images, even. Since

the beginning of time, all the flowers of this particular field have been culled. And now it happens that, in their powerlessness to create, they feel in a confused and indefinite way that there may, some day, be a broadening of the soul and the senses. But the mind, at present, has five gates, half opened and chained, known as the five senses, and it is at these five gates that men enamored of the new art are tugging with all their might.

The mind, that blind and hard-working Unknown, can know, understand, discover nothing except through the senses. They are its only providers, its only agents between Universal Nature and itself. It works exclusively on the materials furnished by them, which they, in turn, can gather only in proportion to their own sensitiveness, strength, and acuteness.

The value of thought evidently depends directly upon the value of the organs, and its breadth is limited to their number.

Monsieur Taine, however, has masterfully studied and developed this idea.

There are five senses, and only five. They reveal to us, by interpreting them, certain properties of surrounding matter, which possesses also a number of other phenomena that we are unable to perceive.

Suppose man had been created without ears; he would exist in much the same manner as now, except that to him the universe would be mute; he would have no conception of noise, of music, which are but transformed vibrations.

But suppose he had been given other organs, powerful and sensitive, gifted with the faculty of transforming into acute perceptions the actions and

attributes of all the inexplicable things that surround us—how much more varied would be the extent of our knowledge and emotions.

It is into this impenetrable domain that every artist attempts to enter, by tormenting, violating, and exhausting the mechanism of his thoughts. Those whose brains have given way, Heine, Baudelaire, Balzac, Byron, the vagabond; those who sought death, disconsolate at the misfortune of being a great poet—Musset, De Goncourt, and so many others—were they not all shattered by this very effort to break down the material barrier that imprisons the human mind?

Yes, our organs are the nourishers and the masters of the artistic genius. The ear begets the musician, and the eye gives birth to the painter. All senses coöperate to give the poet his sensations. With the novelist, the sense of vision usually predominates. It does so to such an extent that it becomes easy to detect, on reading a sincere and well-written novel, the physical qualities and attributes of an author's glance. The magnifying of details, in their importance or minuteness, whether they encroach on the general scheme or not, goes to show all the degrees and differences of myopia. The coördination of the whole, the proportion of the lines, and the preferred perspective to a certain minuteness of observation, the careless omission of some slight information which would be a clue to the characteristics of a person or a group—do not these indicate the far-seeing though careless glance of a far-sighted person?



## CHAPTER III

### THE ITALIAN COAST



THE sky is veiled by clouds. The budding day has a grayish tint, through the mists of night, which spread like a wall, thicker in some places, between dawn and us.

A vague fear takes hold of us, which makes us sad, that until evening these clouds will keep nature mourning, as it were, and we are continually throwing impatient glances at the sky, with a silent prayer upon our lips.

But we can guess, by certain lightened spots which now and then divide the more opaque masses, that the sun is shining above these clouds and is illuminating the blue sky and their snowy surface. We wait and hope.

Little by little they become paler, thinner, and seem to melt. One feels that the sun is burning them, gnawing them, and even crushing them with

all its ardor; that the immense ceiling of clouds is too weak to resist, and that it must break and part under the great weight of glaring light.

A small spot lightens up in the mist, and a faint glimmer is seen. A breach is made, through which glistens the sunshine, spreading as it falls. It looks as if this little hole were on fire. It is like a huge mouth opening wider and wider, all ablaze, with fired lips, pouring on the waves a cascade of golden light.

Then, simultaneously in a thousand places, the shadowy arch breaks and goes to pieces, allowing a hundred arrows to rain down on the water through its wounds, thus scattering over the horizon the full joyousness of the radiant sun.

The air has freshened through the night; a quiver of wind caresses the sea, hardly causing a ripple, with so slight a tickling of its blue, silky surface. In front of us, on a high, rocky peak, which seems to rise out of the sea and lean upon the hills, nestles a little town, painted rose color by the hand of man, as the horizon is by the victorious dawn. A few blue houses, here and there, make charming blue dots, as it were. It looks like the abode of a princess of the *Arabian Nights*. It is Port-Maurice.

When one has seen it thus, one ought not to land there. I did, however.

Inside, it has the appearance of being in ruins, as well as its houses, strewn like crumbs along both sides of the streets. A part of the city which has fallen down, probably during an earthquake, shows from the top to the bottom of the hill, as if on shelves, a row of roofless, dismantled dwellings, old houses of plaster, through which the wind blows. And the rose tint, so pretty from a distance where



it harmonized with the rising sun, on closer view shows a woefully faded, smeared effect, tarnished by the sun and washed out by the rain.

Throughout the streets, tortuously winding corridors full of stones and dust, floats a nameless odor, so penetrating, so strong, so tenacious, that I hurried back to the yacht, my eyes full of dust, my stomach upset.

Yet it is one of the principal towns of that province. To one first setting foot in this part of Italy it looks like a flag of misery.

Facing it, on the other side of the gulf, is Oneglia, a very filthy and ill-smelling town, though its aspect is less miserable and more lively.

Under the large portals of the Royal College, which stand wide open during the vacation, an old woman sits mending a sordidly filthy mattress.

We enter the harbor of Savona. A large group of manufactories or foundries, whose chimneys are fed every day by the coal brought here by four or five English steamers, emit through their giant openings volumes of curling smoke that fall back on the city in a shower of soot, blown here and there by the wind, like snow from Hades, as it were.

Never go into that harbor, sailors of small sailing vessels, if you wish to keep your pretty white sails clean.

Savona is charming, though, a typical Italian town; its narrow streets are full of bustling merchants, with fruit spread on the ground, ripe, red tomatoes, black or yellow grapes, transparent, as if filled with light; green lettuce cleansed in a hurry, the leaves of which spread about in abundance—it gives one the impression of an invasion of the city by vegetable gardens.

After returning to the yacht, I saw along the wharf, on an immense table which filled the deck of a Neapolitan boat, a startling sight—something strange that looked like a murderers' banquet.

Bleeding, murderously red, as it were, giving the boat the color and air of a butchery, a massacre, of torn flesh, even, were spread out in front of thirty swarthy sailors sixty or perhaps a hundred quarters of the blood-red watermelons.

It looked as if these men were burying their teeth in raw flesh, as do captured wild animals in their cages. It was a feast. The crew of a near-by ship has been invited. Every one is happy. The red caps on their heads are not half so vivid in color as the heart of the fruit.

When night had fallen upon us, I went back to the town.

The sound of music made me cross the entire place. I struck an avenue where groups of *bourgeois* and common people were walking leisurely toward the evening concert, given two or three times a week by the municipal band.

These orchestras, in this musical country, are equal, even in the smaller towns, to those of our best theaters. I recalled the one I had heard on the deck of my yacht one night, the memory of which remained as one of the sweetest sensations I had ever experienced.

This avenue ended in a square almost on the beach, and there, in the semi-darkness, relieved by only a few yellow gaslights, this orchestra played, I do not quite remember what pieces, close to the rippling waves.

The latter rather heavily, although the sea breeze had died out, trailed all along the beach, their mo-

notonously regulated murmur, which seemed to accompany the lively music of the instruments; the violet sky, of a brilliantly shining tint, filled with a golden dust of stars, let fall upon us a very slight darkness. The night, with its transparent shadows, dropped over the silent crowd, hardly to be heard whispering, as some walked around the inclosure for the musicians, sat on the benches in the promenade, on lonely rocks on the beach, or on large beams to be used to finish the construction of the framework of a big ship near by.

I cannot say whether the women of Savona are beautiful, but I do know that they are charming, as they go bareheaded at night, each carrying a fan. It was fascinating, this noiseless beating of imprisoned wings, white, black, or spotted, all fluttering like large moths held between the fingers. With each woman, whether resting or walking, I found this vague effort of the leaves, as it were, to escape, while they seemingly made the air cooler, giving a feminine, coquettish aroma to it which was most agreeable for a man to inhale.

Presently, in the midst of the palpitating fans and uncovered heads all about me, I began to fancy myself in fairyland, as I was wont to do when a mere boy at boarding school in the cold dormitory at night, when, before dropping off to sleep, I mused about the contents of a novel secretly devoured under the cover of my desk. Sometimes, too, deep in my old heart, poisoned with incredulity, there is an awakening, for a few instants, of the simple innocence of my youthful heart.

One of the most beautiful things that can be seen in this world is Genoa viewed from the sea.



At the head of the bay the city rises as if from out of the water. On both sides, which make a curve around Genoa, as if to protect and caress it, fifteen small towns, neighbors, vassals, servants, reflect and bathe their light-colored houses in the waters. To the left are Cogoleto, Arenzano, Voltri, Pra, Pegli, Sestri-Ponente, and San Pier d'Arena; to the right, Sturla, Quarto, Quinto, Nervi, Bogliasco, Sori, Recco, Camogli, the last white spot on the cape of Porto-Fino, which closes the gulf on the southeast.

Genoa rises above her immense harbor on the first hill of the Alps, which stand out behind it like a giant wall. On the jetty is a small square tower, a lighthouse, called "the Lantern," which looks like a gigantic candle.

We pass into the outer port, an enormous basin, well sheltered, where innumerable tugboats steam about seeking trade; then, after rounding the eastern jetty, we enter the port itself, crowded with ships, those ships of the south and the Orient, with their delightful coloring, the triangular, one-masted ships, painted and rigged in the most fantastic manner, carrying on their prows blue or gilt Madonnas, or even strange-looking animals, which are regarded as sacred protectors.

This fleet, with its good Virgins and talismans, is lined up along the wharves, their pointed and uneven bows turned toward the center of the basin. Then come the powerful steamers, situated according to the company to which they belong, narrow and high, with colossal outlines. There are also, in the midst of these sea pilgrims, brigs and three-masted ships, clothed in white, like the Arabs, on whose dress the sunlight appears to slide off.

If there is nothing prettier than the entrance to the port of Genoa, equally there is nothing uglier than the entrance to the city. The wharf is a swamp of rubbish, and the narrow streets are inclosed like tortuous corridors between two winding rows of very tall houses, from which emanate pestilential and sickening odors.

One feels in Genoa as in Florence, still more so in Venice, that these once aristocratic cities have fallen into the hands of the people.

Here is recalled the memory of these fierce men who fought or transacted business on the seas, who then, with the money thus obtained, either from conquests or from barterings, had those astonishing palaces built which still line the principal streets. When we enter these magnificent residences, odiously daubed by the descendants of the haughtiest of all republics; when we compare the style, the courts, the gardens, the porticos, the interior galleries, and all the decorative and gorgeous appointments, with the barbaric wealth of the finest mansions of modern Paris, with the palaces of millionaires who only know how to handle money, who are utterly incapable of conceiving, desiring, or creating something new and beautiful at the same time—we understand, then, that the real supremacy of the intelligence, the meaning of the rare beauty of form, the perfection of proportions and lines, have disappeared from our democratic society, composed now of rich financiers without taste and *parvenus* without traditions.

It is even an interesting thing to observe the hackneyed and commonplace atmosphere of the modern hotels. Enter the old palaces of Genoa and you will see a series of courtyards with galleries and

columns, marble staircases of marvelous beauty, all of which were designed and executed by true artists for men of cultivated taste.

Enter the old châteaux of France, and you will notice the same tendency toward a new and original ornamentation.

But enter, next, any one of the wealthiest homes of Paris at the present time, and you will admire curious ancient articles, carefully catalogued, labeled, and exhibited in glass cases, according to their known value, vouched for by experts, but in no instance will you be struck by an original and new invention of the different parts of the mansion.

The architect is supposed to construct a beautiful house, costing several millions, of which he is to receive a fixed percentage, according to the amount of work he puts upon it.

The upholsterer, for a given remuneration, takes charge of the interior decoration. As the gentlemen of this industry are not unaware of their clients' lack of artistic knowledge, and as they would not dare suggest anything new to them, they are perfectly satisfied to repeat what they have already done for others.

After one has visited, in Genoa, these ancient palaces, and admired a few paintings, especially the three masterpieces of Van Dyck, there is nothing more to see except the Campo-Santo, which is a modern cemetery, an extraordinary museum of funeral structures, the most wonderful, the most dismal, the most comical in all the world. All along the four sides of an immense gallery, in a giant cloister, opening on a yard paved with the flat white gravestones of the poor, one passes a series of statues of tradesmen mourning their dead.

What an extraordinary, mysterious idea! The work, in its polished execution, in the chiseling of these figures, bespeaks a remarkable technique and a highly artistic talent. The material of the robes, of the waistcoats and trousers, is depicted in a most realistic manner. I saw a figure wearing a *moiré* silk gown, the reproduction of which, with its folds and creases, was indescribably realistic; and, yet, in my opinion, nothing is so ridiculously grotesquely, ignominiously commonplace as the method of people who thus mourn their beloved ones.

Whose is the fault? The sculptor is the one to blame, as he saw only what was commonplace in the physiognomy of the modern tradesman, and it is no wonder, for they can no longer distinguish the divine spark which the Flemish artists had so well seized and which they reproduced when they depicted even the most ordinary and sometimes the ugliest types of their race. It may be that the *bourgeois* himself is to blame, he who has been tossed about by this low, democratic civilization like a pebble on the beach, whose distinctive characteristics have been worn away, and who has lost, in this constant friction, the last marks that remained of the originality with which all social classes were endowed by nature.

The Genoese are very proud of this astonishing museum, which only bewilders the observer's mind.

From the port of Genoa to the point of Portopino is a series of towns, a scattering of houses on the beach, between the light blue of the sea and the

brilliant green of the mountain. A breeze from the southeast compels us to tack. It is not strong, though its sudden gusts make the yacht keel a little to one side, or dart suddenly ahead, like a runaway horse; and both sides are adorned with streaks of white foam. Then the wind abates, the boat regains its quiet pace, now gliding nearer the shore, now farther from it. About two o'clock the captain surveys the horizon with his glass to make out, according to the quantity of sails and the tacking of the other vessels, the direction and strength of the wind, which, in these parts, sweeps with great suddenness across the water, or comes in gentle zephyrs, as capricious as the moods of a pretty woman.

"We'll have to take in sail, sir," he announces; "the two schooners ahead of us have just hauled down their topsails. Heavy winds over there."

The order was given, and the inflated canvas slid down from the top of the mast, flapping limply and palpitating somewhat, as a bird that has just been shot.

There were no waves. A few ripples foamed a little, here and there; but suddenly, in the distance, I saw the water was white as if some one had thrown a sheet over it. It was coming, approaching rapidly, and when this white line was a few yards away from us the sails of the yacht sustained a rough, brusque shock from the wind that seemed to gallop over the sea, scattering the flying spray, which resembled the feathers plucked from the breast of a swan. All this foam torn from the waters, this thin layer of flying froth, flew about and was scattered by the invisible whistling gust of wind. With our vessel lying on the side, almost sub-



merged by the water, which dashed noisily against the deck, with weather shrouds drawn taut, with masts and spars creaking, we rushed along speed-mad, as it were. It really is a unique sensation, this excitement of holding between your hands, with muscles strained from head to foot, the iron bar that guides through the storm this wild yet inert animal made of canvas and wood.

This fury of the air lasted only three-quarters of an hour; then suddenly, when the Mediterranean had resumed its beautiful blue tint, it seemed to me that the wrath of the sky was appeased, so calm became the atmosphere. It was a fit of passion that had passed away, or the end of a rough morning; and the joyous laugh of the sun again brightened up the world.

We were just approaching the cape, where I perceived at its far end, toward the other extremity, at the foot of a steep rock, a church and three houses. Who on earth could live there? What can the people do? How can they communicate with other living beings, except through one of the little canoes pulled up on the narrow beach?

Now we have cleared the cape. The line of the coast is uninterrupted until Porto-Venera is reached, at the entrance of the Gulf of Spezzia; all this region is incomparably fascinating.

In a wide, deep bay opening before us we can see Santa-Margherita, then Rapallo and Chiavari, and farther away Sestri-Servante.

The yacht, having tacked about, glided along only two cable lengths from the rocks, and at the end of the cape, which we had just rounded, we discovered suddenly a gorge where the sea enters, a gorge hidden away, barely seen, filled with pine,

olive, and chestnut trees. The tiny village of Porto-Fino curls about this quiet basin, in a half circular form.

We sailed slowly through the narrow strait which joins this delightful natural harbor to the sea, and entered the amphitheater of houses, crowned by a forest of a refreshing green hue, both being reflected in the quiet, round mirror where a few fishing smacks seem to be dozing.

One of them, manned by an old sailor, comes toward us. He greets and welcomes us, points a place for anchoring, takes hold of our cable to moor us to land, returns to offer his services and advice, in fine, does the honors of this fishing hamlet. He is the harbor master.

I never, perhaps, experienced a pleasanter sensation than when I entered this delightful green creek. I had a feeling of rest, soothing to the nerves, such as is afforded by the relaxation from the vain struggle of life's battles; and even the delightful sensation of hearing the noise of the falling anchor, telling me we were to remain here for some time, was as nothing compared to the first feeling.

For the last eight days now, I have been rowing. The yacht is motionless in the middle of this quiet miniature harbor; and I meander in my canoe along the coast, in the grottos where the ocean roars in invisible gaps, and around strange, lonely little islands, which it showers with endless kisses at each uprising, and over rocks wholly submerged in water or covered with seaweeds. I love to see, floating under the water, waving in the barely sensible motion of the waves, those long red or green weeds, in which are mingled and hidden, some even gliding in and out of the plants, numberless throngs of young

fishes, just hatched. One would take them for the live progeny of silver needles.

When I glance up at the rocks on the banks, I see groups of naked boys, with swarthy little bodies, all of whom stare in surprise at me. They are innumerable, like the young fishes of the sea, just like a tribe of young new-born tritons, frolicking and scampering up the granite rocks, to drink in the glorious air.

We have left Porto-Fino to spend a little time at Santa-Margherita. It is not a seaport, but it lies deep in a gulf, somewhat sheltered by a mole.

Here the land is so fascinating that it makes one forget the sea. The city is protected by two mountains converging into an angle whose vertex is cut through by a valley leading to Genoa. On both these hills innumerable little paths between two stone walls three feet high intersect one another, go up and down, cross and recross, now narrow and stony, now assuming the form of ravines or stairs, as they divide countless fields or rather orchards of olive and fig trees, garlanded with red vines. Through the foliage of the latter, climbing in the trees, we can catch a glimpse of the blue sea, red capes, white villages, sloping pine forests, and the high mountain crests of gray granite. In front of the houses, scattered here and there, may be seen women making lace. In fact, throughout these parts you could hardly strike a doorway where there are not two or three of these women employed in this hereditary work, handling with delicate fingers numerous white or black threads, from which dangle, with a continual hop and skip, little yellow-colored sticks. These women are often pretty, tall, and of proud demean-



or, though careless in dress and not at all coquettish. Many still show traces of Saracen blood.

One day, in the street of a hamlet, one of them passed near me, leaving me an impression of such exquisite beauty as I never had seen before.

Under a heavy coil of dark hair which fitted about her forehead, evidently betraying a hasty, careless arrangement, were the oval, brown features of an Oriental or a daughter of the Moors, whose graceful carriage she still retained, but the Florentine sun had tinted her skin with gold. Her eyes—such eyes!—were large, and of the deepest black, and she seemed to let slip unconsciously a caress through the longest and thickest eyelashes I ever had beheld. The skin around her eyes was darkened so strangely that had I not seen her in full daylight I should have suspected her of having had recourse to art.

When we meet such beautiful creatures in tatters, why can we not seize them and carry them away, if only to adorn them and tell them they are pretty, as we would lose ourselves in the raptures of a genuine admiration? What if they do not understand the mystery of our enthusiasm, remain irresponsible, like all bewitching idols, made only to be loved by frenzied beings, trying to find words worthy of expressing the praise of their beauty?

However, if I had the choice between the most beautiful of living beings and that of the famous picture of a woman painted by Titian which I was contemplating a week later in the great Hall of the Council, I would take Titian's reclining woman.

Florence—which appeals to me as the city where

I should most ardently have loved to live in the olden times—which still retains, for my eyes and my heart, an inexpressible charm, which attracts me, almost in a sensual manner, through the painting of this woman, the quintessence of a dream, prodigiously carnal in its suggestions! When I think of this city, so full of marvels that one invariably returns at the end of the day's promenade thoroughly tired, like a wandering hunter, among my souvenirs appears the remembrance of the long piece of canvas, on which this tall woman lies, naked and blonde, awake and serenely calm.

Then, after this conjuring of the most powerful seductive charm of a human body, the thought of the sweet and pure Madonnas rises in my mind, those of Raphael first, the "Madonna of the Goldfinch," the "Madonna Granduca," the "Madonna of the Chair," and others besides, those of the minor artists of the ancient times, with their simple features, light hair, idealized and mystical, and those of the more material artists, of a blooming healthy appearance.

As one wanders and meanders in this unique city, and even throughout the whole of Tuscany, where the men of the Renaissance strewed masterpieces with a free hand, one wonders at the glorious and fruitful minds, intoxicated with the sentiment of the beautiful, madly productive, of those generations throbbing in an artistic delirium. In the churches of the small towns, where one goes to see things that have not already been pointed out to the ordinary traveler, one discovers on the walls, or hidden behind the benches for the choir, priceless paintings of those modest masters, who did not sell their canvases in the yet unexplored America.

but kept on working, though hopelessly poverty-stricken, for art's sake, like pious workmen.

And this race, which never faltered in its course, has left nothing inferior. The same ray of imperishable beauty that appeared from the brush of painters and from the chisel of sculptors grew larger in the shape of lines of stones on the face of the monuments. Their churches and chapels are filled with sculptures of Lucca della Robbia, Donatello, and Michelangelo; their bronze portals are by Bonannus or by John of Bologna.

Upon reaching the Piazza della Signoria, facing the Loggia dei Lanzi, we perceived, grouped together under the same portico, the "Rape of the Sabines" and "Hercules Wrestling with the Centaur"; "Nessus," by John of Bologna; "Perseus with the Head of the Medusa," by Benvenuto Cellini, and "Judith and Holofernes," by Donatello. It sheltered, also, only a few years ago, the "David" of Michelangelo.

But the more one is bewildered, the more one is overcome by the seductive charms of a trip through this forest of works of art, the more one is seized, too, with a strange, uneasy feeling which soon mingles itself with the joy of seeing. It comes from the amazing contrast of the modern crowd, so commonplace, so ignorant of what it is looking at, and of the places it inhabits. You readily feel that the delicate soul, the proud and refined feelings of the former dwellers, no longer furnish the zest of life to those heads burdened with round, chocolate-colored hats, nor do they animate the indifferent eyes, exalt the vulgar tastes and desires of this dreamless, matter-of-fact population.

On my way back to the coast, I stopped at Pisa,

to see once more the Duomo. Who will ever be able to explain the melancholic, penetrating charm of certain of those almost dead towns?

Pisa is one of them. No sooner have you entered it than you feel a melancholy languor, a powerless desire to remain and to run away, to flee from this listless, lazy life and yet to stay and undergo the mournful charm of its air, its heaven, its houses, its streets that are inhabited by the most quiet, sad, and silent of people.

Life seems to have left it as did the sea, when it abandoned its port, formerly supreme, and stretched a plain and gave birth to a forest between the new shore and the forsaken city.

The river Arno glides through, like a yellow, undulating streak, between high walls supporting the two principal promenades, lined with rows of yellow houses, some hotels, and a few modest-looking palaces.

On the wharf itself, where alone it interrupts the sinuous curve of the river, the little chapel of Santa-Maria della Spina, belonging to the French architecture of the thirteenth century, shows just above the water its artistically wrought profile. It looks, on the bank of the river, like a quaint Gothic washstand of the Madonna, where the angels came nightly to cleanse the faded finery of the Madonnas.

But through the Via Santa Maria one reaches the Square of the Duomo.

For those who are still to be affected by the sentiment of the beautiful and the mystical power of the monuments, assuredly nothing is more surprising and thrilling than this vast, grass-carpeted square, hemmed in by high bulwarks that inclose, in their totally different attitudes, the Duomo, the

Campo-Santo, the Baptistry, and the Leaning Tower

When you reach the edge of this wild and deserted field, surrounded by old walls, suddenly before your eyes rise these four vast marble creations, so extraordinary in their profile, color, harmonious and superb grace, and you are paralyzed with astonishment and admiration, as if you were before the rarest and most grandiose spectacle that human art can offer to your gaze.

But soon the Duomo attracts and rivets your whole attention with its inexpressible harmony, the irresistible power of its proportions and magnificent grandeur of its façade.

It is a basilica of the Tuscan style of the eleventh century, built of white marble with black and colored inlaid work. You do not experience, at the sight of this perfect example of Roman-Italian architecture, the same awe you feel in the presence of Gothic cathedrals, with their daring height, the elegant charm of their towers and belfries, the stone lacework in which they are enveloped, and the enormous disproportion between their size and their support.

But you remain so entranced with the irreproachable proportions, the beauty of the lines, of the decorations of the façade below, of the pilasters joined by arcades above, of four galleries of columns, each growing smaller, that the attraction of the monument reminds you of a beautiful poem.

It is useless to describe these things; one must see them in their own classical sky, of a peculiar blue, where the clouds, rolling about in silver masses, seem to have been copied from the paintings of Tuscan artists. For those old artists were realists,



thoroughly imbued with the Italian atmosphere; and those who have imitated them under another sky are only the counterfeiters.

Behind the Cathedral, the Campanile, forever leaning over and threatening to fall, gives one an uncomfortable feeling, upsetting our notions of equilibrium; and facing it is the Baptistry, which, with its tall conical cupola, stands before the door of the Campo-Santo.

And in this ancient cemetery, whose frescos are classed like paintings of the greatest interest, stretches out a delightful cloister, with a subtle and gloomy charm, in the midst of which two lime trees hide under their greenery such a quantity of dead wood that the wind shakes it with a strange sound like the rattling of bones.

The days go by and the summer is drawing to an end. I wish to see another far-away country, where other men have left memories, less vivid, perhaps, though none the less eternal. These people are the only ones that have really endowed their country with a Universal Exposition that will always be visited in the centuries to come.



## CHAPTER IV

### SICILY



PEOPLE are convinced, in France, that Sicily is a wild country, difficult of access, and even dangerous to visit. Now and then a traveler, who is thought very daring, takes the risk to go as far as Palermo, and returns saying that the city is a very interesting one. And that is all. But in what respect are Palermo and Sicily interesting? No one knows. In truth, the whole thing is only a question of style. This island, the pearl of the Mediterranean, is not on the list of those countries usually visited by tourists, which it is considered in good taste to know, which, like Italy, make up a part of the education of a well-bred man.

From two special points of view, however, Sicily should attract travelers, because its natural and artistic beauties are as singular as they are wonderful. Every one knows how fertile is this land, which was once known as the granary of

Italy, and which all nations, at one time or other, invaded and mastered, so strong was their desire to possess it, which was the cause of so many men fighting and dying for her sake as if she had been a beautiful woman, ardently desired. It is, just as much as Spain, the country of oranges and the land of flowers, whose air, in springtime, is like a perfumed breath; and every night it kindles, far above the sea, the monster lantern of Etna, the largest volcano in Europe. But what constitutes it, above all, a land unique and most interesting in this world is that it is, from one end to the other, a strange and divine museum of architecture.

In this country, still artistic, architecture is dead, in the sense that it seems to have lost the faculty of creating beautiful things with stone, the mysterious secret of the attraction of lines, the sense of peaceful charm in monuments. We do not seem to understand any more that even the simple proportions of a wall can convey to the mind the same artistic delight, the same deep and secret rapture, as is afforded by the sight of a masterpiece of Rembrandt, of Velasquez, or of Paul Veronese.

Sicily had the good fortune to be occupied by prolific nations, from both south and north, who covered its territory with works of infinite variety, where mingle, in an unexpected and charming manner, the most contrary influences. From this has sprung a special art, unknown elsewhere, where the influence of the Arab is felt in the midst of Greek and even Egyptian memories, where the harshness of the Gothic style brought here by the Normans is tempered by the wonderful art of Byzantine ornamentation and decoration.

And it is a source of genuine delight to look for

the special marks of each school in these exquisite monuments, to discriminate between the detail from Egypt, with the lanceolated ogives, brought by Arabs, the vaults in high relief, or rather pendentine, resembling the stalactites of marine grottos, and that of the genuine Byzantine ornament or the beautiful Gothic friezes, which awaken memories of the tall cathedrals of colder countries or the low churches built by Norman princes.

After seeing these monuments, which, though belonging to different periods and being of different origin, still have the same character, the same nature, one can truly say that they are neither Gothic nor Arabic nor Byzantine, but Sicilian; one can assert that there is a Sicilian art and style, forever recognizable, which is assuredly more delightful, varied, more highly colored and full of conceptions, than all the other styles of architecture. It is also in Sicily that the most magnificent and complete examples of ancient Greek architecture can be found, in the midst of scenery of peerless beauty.

The passage from Naples to Palermo is the easiest and the best one to take. One is astonished, upon first leaving the boat, at the activity and life of this city of two hundred thousand inhabitants, which is filled with shops. It is noisy, though less animated than Naples, in spite of the fact that it is quite as full of life. The first thing to attract your attention, especially, are the carts. These are little square boxes perched on yellow wheels, decorated with crude and odd designs, representing historical facts, adventures of all kinds, contests, and even the meetings of sovereigns, but especially the battles of Napoleon I and those of the Crusaders. A peculiarly shaped piece of wood and iron secures

the body of the cart to the axle; spokes of the wheels are also made of carved wood. The animal that draws it wears a gay-colored cotton ball on his head and another one on the back, and is harnessed with coquettish, colored straps, each piece of leather being lined with red wool and tiny bells. These painted carts, queer-looking and each one different from the others, passing through the streets, are attractive to the eye as they run about, like puzzles we try to solve.

The general appearance of Palermo is peculiar. The city, lying in the midst of a vast circle of bare-looking mountains of a grayish blue, tinted here and there with red, is divided into four parts by two long, straight streets, forming a cross in the middle. From this crossroad you see, on three sides, the mountain at the end of the immense corridors of houses, and on the fourth the sea, a deep blue spot, which appears to be quite close, as if the town had tumbled into it.

A strong desire haunted my mind, on the very first day of my arrival. I wished to see the Chapel Palatine, which I had been told was a marvel of marvels.

The Chapel Palatine, the most beautiful in the world, the most surprising religious jewel ever evolved by the human mind and the hand of an artist, is inclosed within the heavy edifice of the Palais-Royal, an ancient fortress built by the Normans.

This chapel has nothing remarkable in its exterior, but as we enter the palace we are immediately struck with the beauty of the interior, which is surrounded by columns. A beautiful winding staircase gives a perspective of a startling effect.



Facing the entrance door, another door, cut through the wall of the palace, opens suddenly on a deep and narrow horizon, revealing an endless expanse of country and boundless vistas, which greet the eye through this arched gap and carry it away with irresistible force toward the blue crest of the hills in the distance, above an immense orange grove.

Upon entering the chapel, you are overcome with awe, as when first beholding a most surprising sight whose power is felt before it is understood. The calm and beauty of this little church, which is positively the most wonderful masterpiece imaginable, causes you to stand entranced before these walls with immense mosaics on a golden background, shining with a soft light that dimly illumines the whole edifice, leading one's mind into biblical and heavenly landscapes, where one sees, in fancy, standing against a burning sky, all those who were associated with the life of Christ.

What renders most striking the impression produced by these Sicilian monuments is the fact that their decoration is at first more noticeable than their style of architecture.

The harmony of lines and proportions is only a frame for the blending of the colors.

On entering our Gothic cathedrals, we experience a stern, almost gloomy, sensation. Their grandeur is impressive; but their majestic stateliness does not captivate us. Here we are conquered, affected by that almost sensual impression which color adds to the beauty of form.

The men who conceived and executed these luminous though dim churches must have had an entirely different idea of the religious feeling from that of the architects of German and French cathe-

drals; and their particular concern was that the light should enter these wondrously decorated naves in such a way that it would neither be seen nor felt, but would glide in imperceptibly, just skimming the walls and producing mysterious, delightful effects, as if the illumination came from the walls themselves, or from the golden ceilings peopled with apostles.

The Chapel Palatine, built in 1132 by King Roger II, after the Norman-Gothic style, is a small basilica with three naves. It is only thirty-three meters long by thirteen wide, a toylike affair, a miniature basilica.

Two rows of beautiful marble columns of different colors lead to the cupola, where a colossal figure of Christ, surrounded by angels with outstretched wings, is looking down. The mosaic which fills the back of the lateral chapel is a striking work of art. It represents St. John preaching in the desert. You would take it for a Puvis de Chavannes, but more highly colored, more forceful, truer, and less artificial in appearance, executed at a time of deep religious faith by an inspired artist. The apostle is seen speaking to a few people. Behind him is the desert, and beyond that a few blue mountains, whose soft outlines are lost in the mist—mountains so familiar to the Oriental traveler. About the saint, around and behind him, is a golden and marvelous sky, wherein God seems to abide.

Returning to the entrance, we stop under the pulpit, a single square of red marble, surrounded by a frieze of white marble, inlaid with small mosaics and supported on four columns delicately chiseled. One wonders at what the taste of a true artist can accomplish with so little.

The whole of this wonderful effect is due to the contrast of the marbles and the mosaics. It is this that furnishes their characteristic work. The lower parts of the walls, which are white and are decorated in delicate stone embroideries, bring out forcibly, by the very fact of their simplicity, the wealth of color in the paintings above.

But you discover, even in that small lacework running along the lower wall, delightful things that could be held in the hollow of the hand; for instance, two peacocks, whose beaks are intertwined, carrying a cross between them.

28/97 This style of decoration is to be found in many churches in Palermo. The mosaics of the Martorana are, perhaps, even more remarkable in their execution than those of the Palatine Chapel; but there cannot be found in any other monument the same degree of wonderful *ensemble* which makes this divine masterpiece unique.

I come back slowly to the Hotel of the Palms, which has one of the finest gardens in the city, one of those typical gardens of tropical countries, filled with enormous and strange plants. A traveler, seated on a bench, gives me in a few words the events of the past year, and going back to the memories of bygone years, he says, among other things: "This happened when Wagner lived here."

Astonished at this, I inquired: "What, here, in this hotel?" "Why, yes, it was while here that he wrote the last notes of *Parsifal* and corrected the proofs."

And I learn that the illustrious German master spent a whole winter in Palermo, and that he left this town only a few months before his death. Here, as everywhere else he lived, he showed his ungovern-

able temper and unendurable pride, while he left the impression of being the most unsociable of men.

I wished to see the apartment occupied by this genial musician, for it seemed to me that he must have left something of his strong personality, and that I should perhaps find some beloved object, a favorite chair, or the table at which he had worked. Surely some trace of his sojourn here, or, at least, the souvenir of a mania, or the indication of some habit.

At first I saw only a beautiful hotel apartment. I was shown the changes he had made here and there, the couch in the middle of the room, which he covered with brilliant rugs worked in gold.

Then I opened the door of a mirrored cabinet.

A delicious and powerful perfume blew out, like the caress of a breeze that had passed over a field of roses.

The proprietor of the hotel, who was my guide, said: "He kept his clothes in here, after perfuming them with essence of roses. This odor will never evaporate."

I inhaled, for a few seconds, this breath of flowers, inclosed in this piece of furniture, forgotten here, a captive; and it seemed, in truth, as if I had found something of Wagner in this perfume which he loved—a little of his personality, of his desires, of his soul, in this mere trifle, of the secret and beloved habits which are the making of the intimate life of a man.

I then went out and meandered through the town.

No one is less a Neapolitan than a Sicilian. In the lower classes one finds a Neapolitan three-fourths a jack-in-the-box. He gesticulates, bustles about, becomes excited without cause, expresses him-

self by gestures as well as by words, is always amiable, as if taking an interest in what concerns you; gracious through cunning as well as by nature, he always answers by pleasant words the most disagreeable things said to him.

But in the Sicilian one sees a great deal of the Arab. He has his sedateness of manner, combined with the liveliness of the Italian. His native pride, his love of titles, the very nature of his pride, and even his features, make him more like a Spaniard than like an Italian. But that which gives one at all times the impression of the Orient is the peculiar voice, the nasal intonation of the street criers. One hears everywhere this shrill note of the Arab, which seems to come down from the forehead to the throat, instead of, as in the north, rising from the chest to the mouth. And the drawling song, monotonous and soft, heard through the open door of a house as we pass by, is surely the same, as to rhythm and accent, as that sung by the rider clothed in white who guides travelers through the endless and bare regions of the desert.

At the theater, though, the Sicilian becomes Italian again; and it is very interesting to attend an operatic performance in Rome, Naples, or Palermo.

Every impression of the public is expressed as soon as felt. Excessively nervous, gifted with an ear as true as it is sensitive, loving music to distraction, the entire audience becomes a sort of vibrating animal, which feels but does not reason. In the space of five minutes it will applaud an actor with enthusiasm and hiss with frenzy; it stamps with joy or with rage, and if a false note escapes from the throat of the singer, a strange cry, exasperated and in a high key, bursts from every throat



at the same time. When opinions differ, the hissing and cheering are deafening. Nothing is allowed to pass unnoticed by these attentive and quivering hearers, who express every emotion, and sometimes, seized with sudden anger, roar as would a menagerie of wild animals.

*Carmen* just now fascinates the Sicilian people, and one hears from morning till night the famous "Toreador" air hummed in the streets.

The streets of Palermo are not remarkable in any way. They are wide and well kept in the richer sections, and resemble in the poorer ones the narrow, winding, and tortuous lanes of all Oriental towns.

The women, dressed in gowns made of bright red, blue, or yellow rags, sit chatting before their doors, watching passers-by with their brilliant black eyes shining under a forest of dark hair.

Sometimes in front of the building of the official lottery, which is in permanent use, like a religious service, and from which the State draws a large dividend, you witness a typical though comical incident.

Facing this building is a Madonna in its niche, with a lantern at its feet. A man comes out of the office, his lottery ticket in hand, puts a sou in the collection box that opens its little black cavity before the statue, and then makes the sign of the cross with the numbered ticket which he has just recommended to the Virgin, whose good graces he tries to win by this offering.

Stopping here and there before the windows of the shops, your eye is soon attracted by a strange photograph that represents an underground tunnel, full of dead bodies, grinning skeletons, oddly

clothed. One reads underneath: "Cemetery of the Capuchin Friars."

What can this be? If you ask an inhabitant of Palermo, he replies with disgust: "Don't go to see that horrible thing. It is a barbarous affair, which will disappear before long, thank goodness! Besides, no one is buried there any more."

It is difficult to obtain more detailed information, such is the horror the Sicilians have of these extraordinary catacombs.

This is, however, what I succeeded in finding out. The earth of the ground on which the convent of the Capuchin Friars is built possesses the peculiar property of hastening the decomposition of dead flesh, so that in a year there is nothing left on the bones but a dried, black skin, which clings to them, retaining sometimes the hair of the heads and cheeks.

The coffins are inclosed in small lateral vaults, each one containing eight or ten bodies, and when the year is passed the coffins are opened, from which are taken these horrible mummies, bearded and convulsed, as if howling in racking pain. Then they are hung up in one of the principal galleries, where the family can visit them from time to time. People who wished to have their bodies preserved in this manner asked for it before they died, and they will remain forever hanging under these dim vaults, like objects kept in museums, in consideration of a stipulated sum paid annually for that purpose by the existing relatives. When the latter cease to pay the bodies are buried in the usual manner.

Immediately I was possessed by a strong desire to visit this sinister collection of departed beings.

At the door of a small convent of most unpre-

tending appearance, an old Capuchin friar, clad in a brown robe, received and preceded me without a word, knowing very well what strangers come here to see.

We cross a poor chapel, and with slow steps descend a stone staircase, and, suddenly, I see before me an immense gallery, high and wide, whose walls are covered with skeletons, clothed in the strangest and most grotesque fashion. Some are hung up, side by side, others lie on five stone tables, one over the other, from the floor to the ceiling. A row of dead bodies, standing up in a solid row, is on the ground, and their heads seem about to speak. Some are covered with a hideous vegetation, which distorts the jaws and bones; others again retain their hair, others a bit of mustache, others a few hairs of their beard.

Some look upward with their empty eyes, others look down; here are some that seem to be grinning horribly, and others that are contorted as if in pain; others again seem affrighted by some supernatural apparition.

They are all clothed, these poor, hideous, and ridiculous dead, clothed by their family, who have had them taken from their coffins and placed in this appalling assembly. Nearly all have some sort of black robe, the hood of which is sometimes drawn over the head. But there are some who were dressed sumptuously; and a miserable skeleton, with a head-dress consisting of a cap of Greek embroideries, and wrapped in a dressing-gown, like that of a man of wealth, lies on its back, as if sleeping a terrifying though comical sleep.

A placard, like that a blind man carries, hangs from the neck, bearing the name and the date of

death. These dates cause a shiver to go through one's very bones: 1880—1881—1882!

This, then, was a man eight years ago. It lived, laughed, spoke, ate, and drank, and was full of joy and hope. And there it is now! Before this double row of indescribable beings coffins and boxes are heaped up; some are expensive coffins in ebony, with brass ornaments and small, square glass openings. One would think they were trunks, valises, of savages, that were bought in some bazaar by those going on the voyage, as people used to say.

But other galleries open to the right and left, indefinitely lengthening out this immense subterranean cemetery.

Here are the women, who are still more grotesque than the men, for they have been dressed up in a coquettish manner. The heads seem to look at you, squeeze into lace and beribboned bonnets, apparently as white as snow, around those black faces decayed and worn away by the strange workings of the earth. The hands, resembling the cut-up roots of a tree, peep out from the sleeves of a new robe, and the stockings that inclose the bones of the legs seem empty. Sometimes the skeleton has only shoes on, great, clumsy shoes for the poor dried-up feet.

Here are the young girls, the hideous young girls, in their white garments, with a crown of metal around the head, as the symbol of innocence. They grin so horribly you would take them for very old women. And yet they are sixteen, eighteen, twenty. It is horrible.

We then reach a gallery full of little glass coffins. These are the children. The bones, hardly formed, have not been able to resist. And one can

hardly distinguish anything, such is the distorted and fearful appearance presented by these poor little wretched beings. But you are moved to tears, for the mothers have dressed them in the last garments they wore on earth. And the parents come to see them thus.

In many instances a photograph hangs above the skeleton, showing the child as it looked when alive, and nothing is so startling as this contrast evoked by the comparison of the two, and the thoughts it evokes.

We cross a darker and lower gallery, that seems to have been reserved for the poor. In a dark corner are apparently a score of them, hung up under a transom, through which blows the outer air in fitful gusts. They are clothed in a sort of black linen, tied at the neck and feet, and they all lean over one another. They look as if they were freezing and wanted to get away, and even shouting: "Help! Help!" You might take them for the crew of some ship, still buffeted by the wind, clad in the brown and tarred oilskins worn by the sailors in a storm.

And here is the part set aside for the priests. A large gallery of honor. At first sight they seem more horrible to look at than the others, clothed in their sacred vestments—black, red, or purple. But, when you have looked at each one separately, a nervous and irresistible sarcastic smile is evoked in you at their strange and comical though sinister-looking attitudes. Here are some that look as if they were about to sing; others seem to be praying. Some one has raised their heads and crossed their arms. Some wear the biretta of an officiating priest, which, placed on the fleshless brow, now and again falls over the ear and the nose. It is the carnival



of death, rendered more ludicrous by the gilded richness of ornamentation of the sacerdotal garments.

Now and then, it is said, some of the heads roll to the ground, the cords of the neck having been gnawed by the mice. Thousands of these live in this human-flesh warehouse.

The remains of a man who died in 1882 were shown to me. A few months previous, full of life and thoroughly happy, he had come to choose his place, accompanied by a friend: "I shall be there some time," said he laughingly.

The friend comes back alone now and gazes for hours at a time at the motionless skeleton, standing erect at the place he had pointed out himself.

On certain feast days the catacombs of the Capuchin Friars are opened to the public. A drunkard once fell asleep there and woke up in the middle of the night. He called, shrieking with fright and running about on all sides in his desperate effort to escape; but no one heard him. He was found next morning, clinging so tightly to the bar of the entrance gate that he was removed with difficulty. He had become insane. Since that day a large bell has been hung near the doorway.

After this sinister visit I felt the desire to see some flowers, and I drove to the Villa Lasca, whose gardens, lying in a forest of orange trees, are filled with magnificent tropical plants.

On returning to Palermo, I saw at the left a small town about halfway up a hill, and on the summit was a ruin. This town is Monreale, and the ruin is Castellaccio, the last refuge of the Sicilian brigands, I was told.

Théodore de Banville, the master poet, wrote a treatise on French prosody which all would-be poets

ought to know by heart. One of the chapters of this excellent book is entitled: "Concerning Poetic Licenses"; and when you turn the page you read:

"There are none."

Thus, on reaching Sicily, one asks, sometimes from idle curiosity, again from anxiety: "Where are the brigands?" and every one answers you, "There are none."

There have been none for the past five or six years. Thanks to the secret complicity of certain landed proprietors, whose interests the brigands served as often as they plundered them, they managed to exist in the mountains of Sicily until the arrival of General Palavicini, who is still the commanding officer in Palermo. But this officer pursued them with such energy that the last of them disappeared in a short time.

It is true that there are often attacks by armed men, and assassinations are still frequent; but these are crimes committed by lone criminals, and not by organized bands, as formerly.

After all, Sicily is as safe a country for any traveler as England, France, Germany, or Italy, and those who are seeking adventures of the *Fra Diavolo* sort would better look elsewhere.

The truth is that a man is safe anywhere except in the large cities. If one would take the trouble to count the number of travelers held up and plundered by bandits in wild countries and those assassinated by the wandering tribes of the desert, and if we compared the accidents that happen in these places, reputed so dangerous, with those that occur in a month in London, Paris, or New York, we should find how comparatively safe these dreaded regions are.

Moral: If you are looking for cutthroats go to

Paris or London, but do not come to Sicily. In this country you can go about the highways day and night without an escort and unarmed; you will meet people exceedingly gracious to strangers, except, perhaps, those employed by the post and telegraph offices. I say this, however, only for those of Catania.

About halfway up one of the mountains which overlook Palermo is the little town called Monreale, famous for its ancient monuments; and in the vicinity of this city, perched far up in the mountains, the brigands used to conduct their operations. The practice of placing sentinels along the road that leads to it is still continued. Do they thereby wish to reassure the travelers or to scare them? I do not know.

The soldiers stationed at each turn of the road remind one of the legendary sentinel of the War Minister in France. For ten years, without any known reason, a soldier was placed on sentry duty in the corridor leading to the Minister's apartments, with instructions to keep passers-by away from the wall. Now, it happened that a new Minister, of an inquisitive turn of mind, on succeeding fifty others who had passed this functionary without paying special attention to him, asked whence came this custom.

No one could tell him, neither the Cabinet Minister nor any of his colleagues. But one of the ushers, who probably kept a careful diary, recalled that a soldier had been put there formerly because the wall had been freshly painted and the Minister's wife, not having been cautioned, ruined her gown. The paint had dried, but the sentinel remained.

And so the brigands have disappeared, but the

men are still to be seen on duty. The road winds all around the mountain, and finally reaches the city, which is peculiar, highly colored, and very unclean. The streets are made of steps, which, in turn, seem to be made up of pointed rocks, more like stone teeth. The heads of the men are bound in red handkerchiefs, after the Spanish fashion.

Here is the Cathedral, a great monument, more than three hundred feet long, which resembles the shape of a Maltese cross, with three apses and three naves, separated by eighteen columns of Oriental granite, resting on a base of white marble and a pedestal of gray marble. The portal, which is really admirable, serves the purpose of a frame for two magnificent bronze doors, made by "Bonannus, *civis Pisanus*."

The interior of this building displays, in the way of decorations of mosaic with gold background, the most complete, the richest, and the most startling work of the kind ever seen.

These mosaics, the largest in Sicily, cover the walls entirely—a surface six thousand four hundred meters. Just picture in your mind these immense and superb decorations, which represent, throughout the whole church, the mythical stories of the Old Testament, of the Messiah, and of the Apostles. On a golden sky, which shows a wide horizon round the naves, you can see, larger than life-size, the prophets announcing the coming of the Redeemer; then, Christ and those who lived in His time.

Back of the choir an immense figure of Jesus, whose features resemble those of Francis I, towers over the whole church, seeming to fill it entirely, so large and impressive is this strange picture.

It is to be regretted that the ceiling, destroyed

by a fire, should have been redecorated in the crudest manner. The loud tones of the gilding and coloring are very displeasing to the eye.

Quite close to the Cathedral we enter the old cloister of the Benedictines. Let those who have a liking for cloisters go and walk through this one, and they will immediately forget almost entirely any others they have ever seen before.

How could one help adoring these cloisters, so quiet, secluded, and cool, invented, it seems, to inspire the thought that flows freely from the lips, deep and clear in its nature, while one walks slowly under these long, melancholic arcades?

How especially do they seem to have been made to engender day-dreams, these stone alleys, with small columns, inclosing a garden, which rests the eye without causing it to wander, without diverting one's attention.

But the cloisters in our countries often have an aspect too strictly monastic, too sad, even the most beautiful, like that at Saint Wandrille, in Normandy. They cause a tightening of the heart and sadden the soul.

Let any one visit the melancholy cloister of the Chartreuse in the province of Verne, among the wild mountains of the Maures. It strikes a chill to one's marrow.

The wonderful cloister of Monreale, on the contrary, gives you such a charming sensation that you would fain remain in it for an indefinite length of time. It is very large, square, of a pretty and delicate elegance; no one that has not seen it can even understand the harmony of a colonnade. The exquisite proportions, the incredible slenderness of all these slight columns, as they stand two by two, each



pair different, some in mosaics and others plain—these covered with sculptures of peerless delicacy and those ornamented with a simple design in stone, which climbs up and around, like creeping ivy—astonish the gaze, charm it, giving birth to that artistic delight which one feels in the presence of perfect taste.

And, like these pretty little columns, the capitals are also of a charmingly varied design. And one is astonished at the very rare combination of the admirable effect of the whole and the perfection of every detail.

One cannot view this masterpiece of artistic beauty without recalling the verses of Victor Hugo on the Greek artist who could put

“Something as beautiful as the human smile,  
On the profile of the Propylæa.”

This beautiful walk is inclosed between very high and very old walls, with pointed arcades; it is now all that is left of the convent.

Sicily is the birthplace, the true and only country, of colonnades. The interior courts of the old palaces and houses of Palermo contain some that are beautiful, which would be renowned anywhere, but particularly so in this island so rich in monuments.

The little cloister of the Church of San Giovanni degli Eremiti, one of the oldest churches in Normandy, which is of Oriental character, though less remarkable than that of Monreale, is still superior to anything of the kind with which I am familiar.

On leaving the convent one enters the garden where one can look down upon the whole valley full of orange blossoms. An incessant breeze rises from

this perfumed forest, a breeze that enraptures the mind and the body. The uncertain and poetical craving that forever haunts the soul, prowling about, maddening and unattainable, here seems on the point of being realized. This odor surrounds one, mingling the refined sensation of perfumes with the artistic joys of the mind, throws you for a few seconds into a well-being of mind and body that is almost happiness.

Upon raising my eyes toward the high mountain towering over the city, I perceive on its summit the ruin I had noticed the day before. I learn upon inquiry that that château had been the last repair of the Sicilian brigands. Even to-day, very few people ever go up to this ancient castle, called Castellaccio. The path, on a high hill difficult of access, is hardly known. But we are bent upon going there. One of the gentlemen of Palermo, who is doing the honors of his country, insists upon giving us a guide. Unable to find a guide sure of his way, he applied, unknown to us, to the chief of police, and in a short time a man of whose real calling we were ignorant began the ascent of the mountain with us.

But he himself hesitates, and, meeting another man, he asks him to join us; thus we have now a guide for our guide. They question every one they meet. Finally a priest advises us to go straight ahead. And we begin to climb, followed by our leaders.

The road now is almost impracticable. Rocks must be scaled, and we must use every bit of our strength to raise ourselves from one place to another. And this lasts a long while.

We finally reach the summit where the castle itself is buried in a wonderful chaos of enormous

gray stones, smooth or sharp-pointed, which surround it and spread far out on all sides.

The sight from this summit is one of the most wonderful. All round this bristling hill are deep valleys inclosed by other hills, showing toward the interior of Sicily an endless horizon of peaks and summits. Facing us is the sea; at our feet, Palermo. The city is surrounded by that forest of orange trees which has been called "the shell of gold," and this forest of black verdure spreads like a dark stain at the foot of grayish and reddish mountains, which seem burned, consumed, and gilded by the sun, so bare and yellow are they.

One of our guides has disappeared; the other follows us into the ruins. They are of a beautiful wildness and quite extensive. One sees readily that no one visits them. Everywhere the ground sounds hollow under our feet; sometimes an entrance to the subterranean passages may be seen. The man examines them with curiosity and tells us that many brigands lived there formerly. This was their safest refuge and the one most dreaded. As we are about to descend, the first guide reappears, but we decline his services, and find without difficulty a very easy path which could be used by women.

The Sicilians seem to have taken pleasure in exaggerating and multiplying stories of bandits to frighten strangers; and to-day travelers hesitate to land on this island, which is as quiet and as safe as Switzerland.

To illustrate this I give one of these adventures with these terrible malefactors, which I guarantee to be true. A very distinguished entomologist of Palermo, M. Ragusa, discovered a coleoptera which

for a long time had been confounded with the *Polyphylla Olivieri*. Now, a German scientist, M. Kraatz, recognizing that it belonged to an entirely distinct species, desired to possess some specimens of it, and wrote to one of his Sicilian friends, M. di Stephani, who in his turn addressed himself to M. Giuseppe Miraglia, to beg him to capture for him some of these insects. But they had disappeared from that part of the country. Just at this time M. Lombardo Martorana, of Trapani, announced to M. di Stephani that he had just got more than fifteen polyphylla.

M. di Stephani hastened to inform M. Miraglia in the following letter:

“MY DEAR JOSEPH: The *Polyphylla Olivieri*, having had warning of your murderous intentions, has taken another route, and has found a refuge on the coast of Trapani, where my friend Lombardo has already captured more than fifteen individuals.”

Now the adventure takes on the tragi-comic character of an epic.

At this time the neighborhood of Trapani was infested, it seems, by a brigand named Lombardo. Now, M. Miraglia had thrown his friend's letter into the wastebasket. A servant emptied the basket in the street; then the street-cleaner passed by and carried out to the dump-heap the refuse that he had gathered. A peasant crossing that part of the country saw a pretty bit of blue paper, only slightly crumpled, picked it up and put it in his pocket, partly through precaution and partly through an instinctive desire to turn it, some way or other, into money.

Several months passed, then this man, having been called to a questorship, threw away the letter. A policeman picked it up and presented it to a judge,

who immediately fell upon these words: "Murderous intentions . . . taken another route . . . found refuge . . . captured . . . Lombardo."

The peasant was imprisoned, questioned, almost tortured. He knew nothing. They kept him imprisoned, and a severe examination was begun. The magistrates published the suspicious letter, but as they had read "Petronilla Olivieri" instead of "Polyphylla," the entomologists took no notice of it.

Finally they deciphered the signature of M. di Stephani, who was summoned to court. His explanations were not admitted. M. Miraglia, questioned in his turn, finally cleared up the mystery.

The peasant had remained three months in prison. One of the last Sicilian brigands was thus in reality known as a species of bug, christened by men of science under the name of *Polyphylla Ragusa*.

To-day there is no less dangerous occupation than that of traveling in Sicily, either in a carriage or on horseback, or even on foot. All the more interesting excursions can be made in carriages. The first one to be undertaken is that to the Temple of Ségasta.

So many poets have sung the praises of Greece that every one thinks he knows it, and carries a mental picture of the country, such as he would like it to be, or as it looks in his dreams.

Sicily has realized my dream, and when I think of this land, so artistic in everything, I picture to my mind tall mountains, with soft classical outlines, and on their summits those severe-looking temples, somewhat massive, perhaps, but admirably majestic, which one meets everywhere in that island.



Every one has seen Pæstum and admired the three superb ruins scattered on this bare plain, bounded by the sea in the distance and inclosed on the other side by a large circle of bluish hills. But if the Temple of Neptune is in better condition and in purer style (so it is said) than the temples of Sicily, these are placed in such unexpected marvelous landscapes that words cannot render the impression they make on the mind.

On leaving Palermo, you first reach the extensive forest, known as "the Shell of Gold," and then a railway follows a shore of reddish mountains and rocks. The road finally leads toward the interior of the island, and we leave the train at the station of Alcamo-Calatafimi.

Then we go through a country that waves here and there like the swell of a motionless sea. There are no forests, few trees, but plenty of vines and cultivated fields; and the road lies through two uninterrupted rows of blossoming aloes. They look as if, according to certain instructions, they had all grown to the same height, forming the thick and strange column sung by so many poets. You can see, far in the distance, a multitude of these warlike plants, which are thick and sharp-pointed, carrying with them, as it were, the weapons and banner of battle.

After about two hours' traveling you suddenly perceive two high mountains, joined by an easy path, shaped like a crescent, which rises between their summits; and in the middle of this crescent is the profile of a Greek temple, one of those impressive and beautiful monuments that a bygone artistic nation erected to its human gods.

You must go around one of these hills by a wind-

ing road, and then you can see the temple once more, but this time you see it in full. From here it looks as if it were leaning on the mountain itself, from which it is really separated by a deep ravine; but the mountains spread all around it as if to shelter it. It stands out distinctly, with its thirty-six Doric columns against the green draperies, which form a background for this enormous monument, standing alone in this solitary, limitless country.

You feel, on seeing this magnificent landscape, that nothing but a Greek temple could be erected here, and only here would it be in harmony with its surroundings. This Temple of Ségesta was placed at the foot of the mountain by a man of genius, who appears to have been inspired as to the exact position it should occupy. It gives life to the wide landscape; it fills it with animation and makes it divinely beautiful.

On the mountain top, whose base we followed to reach the temple, we find the ruins of the theater.

When you travel in a country that the Greeks have colonized it is only necessary to find their theaters to get the finest points of view. That of Ségesta, on the crest of a mountain, is at the center of an amphitheater of small mountains, whose circumference is one hundred and fifty to two hundred kilometers. You discover a few more summits behind these, and through a wide valley facing us we perceive the sea, which is a deep blue in the midst of all this green.

When you have seen Ségesta you can go to see Sélinonte, an immense pile of columns that have fallen in a row, side by side, like dead soldiers, or else in a crumpled heap. The ruins of these giant temples, the greatest in Europe, fill a large plain

and also cover a small hill beyond that. They follow the beach of light-colored sand, where are moored a few fishing smacks, without any place in sight that fishermen might inhabit. This shapeless heap of stones, however, can interest only archæologists or poetical souls affected by all traces of the past.

But Girgenti, the ancient Agrigentum, placed like Sélinonte on the southern coast of Sicily, offers the most extraordinary collection of temples that it can be given any one to see.

At the side of a long, stony, barren hill, of a reddish tint, without a blade of grass or a shrub, and overlooking the sea, the beach, the seaport, three magnificent stone temples are silhouetted from below against the blue of a southern sky.

They appear to stand in the air unsupported, in the middle of a magnificent though desolate landscape. Everything around them is dead, that is, dry and yellow. The sun has burned and destroyed the earth. Is it the sun, after all, that has bleached the soil in this manner, or the deep fire that forever burns in the veins of this volcanic island? For all around Girgenti is stretched the peculiar country of the sulphur mines. Everything in the vicinity is sulphurous—the earth, the stones, the sand.

The temples, eternal abodes of the gods, dead like their human brothers, remain on their wild hills, with only a distance of half a kilometer between them.

The first is that of the Lacinian Juno, which contained, it is said, the famous painting of Juno by Zeuxis, who had for models the five most beautiful girls of Acragas.

Then the Temple of Concord, one of the temples

of antiquity still in the best state of preservation, which was used as a church in the Middle Ages.

Farther away are the remains of the Temple of Hercules; and last, the Temple of Jupiter, praised by Polybius and described by Diodorus, constructed in the fifth century and containing thirty-eight half columns, eighteen feet in circumference. A man can stand erect in each fluting.

Seated on the roadside, which runs along the foot of this wonderful coast, one remembers, before these admirable mementos, the most artistic of all nations. It seems as if the whole of Olympus were before us, the Olympus of Homer and the Greek poets, the Olympus of charming, carnal gods, who were of the same clay and as passionate as we are, who impersonated, in a poetical manner, the tender love of our hearts, the dream of our souls, and all the instincts of our senses.

Antiquity itself rears its head against this ancient sky. A powerful and strange feeling comes over us, a desire to kneel before the august remains left here by the masters of our masters.

There is certainly something divine about this Sicilian land; for, if we find these last abodes of Juno, Jupiter, Mercury, or Hercules, we also meet the most remarkable Christian churches in the world. The remembrance of the cathedrals of Cefalu or Monreale, and of the Palestine Chapel, that marvel of marvels, remains even deeper and more powerful than that of the Greek monuments.

At the end of the hill of the Temples of Girgenti begins a most extraordinary country, which might be the Kingdom of Satan; for if, as it was believed in ancient times, the devil inhabited a vast subterranean region, filled with melting sulphur, where he

boiled the souls of the damned, then without a doubt it was in Sicily that he elected to have his mysterious abode. Sicily supplies almost the whole world with sulphur. Thousands of mines may be found in this island of fire.

But first, a few kilometers from the town, we came across a little strange-looking hillock, called Maccaluba, which is composed of clay and limestone and covered with small cones two or three feet high. You might take them for blisters, some terribly monstrous disease of nature, for they emit a warm mud as if the soil were suppurating; and sometimes they hurl stones to a considerable height, roaring and throwing out foul gases. They growl, as it were, these horrible leprous little volcanoes, these running sores.

We next wish to visit the sulphur mines. We then go into the mountains. Before us stretches a desolate country, a wretched soil, which appears to have been cursed by nature. The valleys are gray, yellow, stony, and sinister, bearing the stigma of a divine reprobation in their solitude and poverty, which, nevertheless, possess a certain grandeur.

Finally we reach a few miserable-looking buildings. Here are the mines of which there are more than a thousand in the neighborhood it is said.

On entering the inclosure of one of them you notice, at first, a singular hillock, grayish and smoky. It is a real sulphur well, made by human hands.

But on the other side of the island, a few hours from the coast, is one of the most wonderful phenomena that can be seen anywhere. I mean the island of the volcano, that fantastic flower of sulphur, which blooms in mid-ocean.

You leave Messina at midnight, in a wretched



steamboat, where the first-class passengers are unable to find a seat, even on deck.

Not the slightest breeze; the boat alone disturbs the quiet of the night.

The shores of Sicily and those of Calabria exhale such a powerful odor of blossoming orange trees that the whole channel is perfumed by it, as if it were a lady's bower. The city is soon left behind, and you pass between Scylla and Charybdis; the mountains become lower, while above them appears the flat and snowy summit of Mount Etna, silvery in the light of the full moon.

Then we fall asleep for a while, lulled by the monotonous noise of the ship's paddles, and we awaken to find that it is almost daybreak.

Now we are opposite the Lipari Islands. The first on the left and the last on the right emit a thick white smoke. They are the Volcano and the Stromboli, and between them may be seen the Lipari, the Filicuri, the Alicuri, and a few other low and small islands.

Lipari, where we land first, is composed of a few white houses, at the foot of a green hill. The place is fruitful and charming, surrounded by beautiful rocks of a peculiar shape and of a deep subdued red. There are mineral waters, which made it popular in bygone days.

Lipari ends on the north side in an unusually white mountain, which might be mistaken for one of snow were it in a colder country. It is here that the world supplies itself with pumice stone.

I hired a boat with four oarsmen, to go and see the island of the Volcano.

The reflection of the red rocks in the blue sea is a strange sight. A little strait is passed that

divides the two islands. The crest of the island of the Volcano rises above the waves like a submerged crater.

It is a small uncultivated island, whose peak is about twelve hundred feet high, and it has a surface of twenty square kilometers. We go around another islet, the Volcanello, which rose abruptly from the sea about the year 200 B. C., and is united to the larger island by a narrow strip of land, overflowed by the waves on stormy days.

Now we are in a deep bay facing the smoking crater. At its foot is a house occupied by an Englishman, who is sleeping, they say, otherwise I never could climb this volcano, which is exploited by this manufacturer; but he is sleeping, and so I can cross a large kitchen garden, then vineyards belonging to him, and again a forest of blossoming gorse. One would say it was an immense yellow scarf, draped about the sharp cone, whose top is also of the same color, blinding under the glare of the sun. I ascend by a narrow path, steep and slippery, winding through cinders and lava. As in Switzerland, we sometimes see a stream falling from the top of a mountain, so here we find an unruffled cascade of sulphur that has poured through the crevices. It is like a stream of congealed light, the fluid rays of the sun.

I finally reached the crest, where a large platform surrounds the crater. The earth quakes, and in front of me, from an opening the size of a man's head, issues with great force an immense jet of flame and steam, while from the edge of this hole pours the liquid sulphur, gilded by the fire. It forms immediately into a yellow lake around this fantastical spring. Farther away, other crevices throw out

white vapors, which rise heavily in the blue atmosphere.

I advance with a certain sensation of fear on the hot cinders and lava, as far as the edge of the crater, and the most wonderful sight greets my eye.

Deep in this immense well, called the Fossa, which is one thousand feet wide and six hundred deep, from a dozen giant fissures and round holes pour fire, smoke, and sulphur, with a noise like that of immense boilers. You can go down the sides of this abyss and walk along the edge of the volcano. Everything around, under my feet and above me, is yellow, blinding, maddening yellow. Everything is yellow: the soil, the high walls, and the sky itself. The yellow sun pours its brilliant light into this raging whirlpool, whose heat burns like a scald. And the yellow liquid boils, and you see dazzling crystals and strange acids on the edge of this furnace.

The Englishman whom we left sleeping at the foot of the hill makes a business of gathering, storing, and selling these acids and liquids—in fact, everything the crater throws up; for they say all this is worth money, a great deal of money, too.

I come back slowly, out of breath, panting, suffocated by the unendurable fumes of the volcano; and on climbing back to the summit I saw all the Lipari Islands scattered about on the waves. Far away rises Stromboli, while behind me gigantic Etna appears to look down on its children and grandchildren.

On my way back from on board the boat, I had discovered an island behind Lipari. The boatman said it was Salina. That is the place where Malmsey wine is made.

I wanted to drink some of it. It is like a syrup of sulphur. It is the wine of volcanoes—thick, sweet, golden, and so full of sulphur that the taste remains for hours afterward. It ought to be called the devil's drink.

The wretched ship that brought me takes me back. At first I look at Stromboli, a round, high mountain, whose summit smokes and whose base is in deep water. It is only a cone emerging from the water. Clinging to its sides I notice a few houses, which look like seashells. Then my eyes turn toward Sicily, which we are approaching, and I cannot see anything but Mount Etna, which seems to crush it down with its tremendous weight, rearing its snow-covered head above all the other mountains on the island. They look like dwarfs, these other large mountains below it; and Etna itself seems of low stature, such is its great massiveness. To realize thoroughly the size of this weighty giant, one must see it from far out at sea.

To the left are the hilly shores of Calabria and the Strait of Messina, which resembles the mouth of a gulf. We pass through it, and presently enter the harbor. The city is without great interest, and we leave the same day for Catania. We go to Taormina.

Should a person who had only a day to spend in Sicily ask me what to see, I should say, Taormina.

It is only a landscape, but a landscape where you find everything that can possibly appeal to the eye, the mind, and the imagination.

The village rests on a tall mountain, as if it had rolled down from the summit; but we do not stop in it, although it contains some pretty relics of the past, but go to the Greek temple to see the sunset.

I have already said, speaking of the theater of Ségesta, that the Greeks, incomparable decorators as they were, knew how to choose the one and only place where theaters, those houses built for the pleasures of our artistic senses, should be erected.

The one of Taormina is so marvelously placed that there cannot be another spot in the world that can compare with it. When one enters it, goes over the stage, the only one that has come down to us in a good state of preservation, one climbs the tumble-down and grass-grown steps that spectators formerly occupied, where thirty-five thousand people could be seated, and gazes about in astonishment.

You can see the ruins, melancholy though beautiful, the charming columns still white and crowned with their capitals; the sea below you stretching out indefinitely, and the beach with its enormous rocks, its golden sand, and its small white villages. And, towering above all this, to the right, filling half the sky with its huge mass, is Mount Etna, smoking and covered with snow.

Where can you find the races who could accomplish such things? Where are the men who could erect, for the pleasure of the masses, edifices like this?

Now we resume our journey toward Catania, whence I wish to climb the volcano.

The monster is about thirty or forty kilometers distant. This makes us appreciate how enormous it must really be. From its black, cavernous mouth it has thrown up, from time to time, a burning flow of bitumen, which, running down its gentle or rapid slopes, has filled valleys, buried villages, drowned men as a river would, and finally has ended at the



sea, driving it back with great force. They have formed cliffs, mountains, and ravines, these slow waves so clammy and red; and as their color darkened when they were stiffening they have caused the soil all around this immense volcano to become blackened, full of crevices, dents, unseemly designs, caused by the vagaries of eruptions and the whimsical humor of the hot lava.

Sometimes Mount Etna remains undisturbed for centuries at a time, only blowing into the sky its ponderous smoke. Then, under the influence of the sun and rain, the lavas of the ancient volcano overflow, become pulverized, forming a sort of cinder, a black and sandy soil, in which grow olive, orange, and citron trees, pomegranates, and vines.

Nothing is so green, so pretty, or even so charming as Aci-Reale, in the midst of a forest of orange and olive trees. But, every now and then, you find a large black stretch on which time has had no effect, which has retained all its fantastic forms, extraordinary shapes that look like animals with their twisted limbs intertwined.

We reached Catania, a large and fine city built entirely on lava, and from the windows of the Grand Hotel we could see the summit of Mount Etna.

Thanks to the kindness of M. Ragusa, a member of the Alpine Club, we were enabled to make the ascent of the volcano with great facility, in spite of the fact that it is a fatiguing climb, although not dangerous.

A carriage drove us first to Nicolisi, through fields and gardens full of trees grown in the pulverized lava. Now and then we encountered deep ruts in this land, and everywhere the ground was very black.

Then, after three hours' driving and up-hill climbing, we reached the last village at the foot of Mount Etna, called Nicolisi, which is two thousand one hundred feet high, though only fourteen kilometers from Catania.

We now left the carriage and resumed our journey with guides and mules. We wore woolen stockings and gloves.

All about us now were vines that had been planted in lava. Some were young, others old. We then crossed the enormous stratum of 1882, and were astonished at the sight of the immense river, so black and motionless, a bubbling and petrified stream, which poured down from the very top of the smoking crater, fully twenty kilometers away. It had followed valleys, rounded peaks, and crossed plains, this river, and here it was now before us, checked in its progress, as its source of fire had become exhausted.

We kept on climbing, leaving on our right the Mounts Rossi, and were constantly discovering new mountains, which the guides called the sons of Mount Etna, and which have sprouted up near the monster, that carries, as it were, a necklace of volcanoes. They number as many as three hundred and fifty, these black offspring of this giant parent, and many of them are as high as Vesuvius.

We finally reached La Casa del Bosco, a kind of hut inhabited by five or six woodcutters. The guide declared it was impossible to go farther in the wind-storm that had just arisen, and asked for a night's hospitality. The shed itself trembled under the blasts of the hurricane, and the wind blew furiously through the loose tiles of the roof.

Daylight came and the wind had died out. All

about us now was a land full of valleys, whose soil was black. It climbed gently toward the region of snow which glittered at the foot of the last cone, nine hundred feet high.

Now we struck the first snow level. We avoided it by a turn in the road. But another followed it very soon, which we had to cross. The mules hesitated, tested the ground with their hoofs, careful of their advance. All of a sudden I felt as if I were sinking into the earth. The two front legs of my mount broke through the crust on which he was treading, and were buried in the ground up to his breast. The unfortunate beast struggled affrighted, rising only to sink in deeper, and fall in with all four feet through the ice.

The other mules were in the same position. We had to dismount, calm, help, and even drag the poor beasts. Every minute they fell and plunged in this white and cold mass, in which even our feet sank at times up to our knees. Between these snow passes, which filled up the valleys, we found again great fields of lava, looking like stretches of black velvet, glittering in the sun with the same brilliancy as the snow. This was the deserted region, the dead region, which seemed in mourning, either all white or all black, blinding and horrible, though superb—a sight never to be forgotten.

After four hours' walking and toiling we reached the Casa Inglese, a small stone house which was surrounded with ice and was almost buried in the snow at the foot of the last cone, that rises behind it, in a shroud of smoke.

It took us about an hour to climb the nine hundred feet which separated us from the crater. For some time sulphurous and suffocating vapors had

been floating about. We had noticed to the right, and again to the left, huge jets of steam bursting from crevices in the soil, and our hands had felt the scorching heat of large stones. At last we reached a narrow platform. Before us a dense cloud rose slowly, like a white curtain coming out of the earth. We advanced with covered nostrils and mouth, so as not to be suffocated by the sulphur fumes, and suddenly at our feet opened an enormous and fearful abyss, about three miles in circumference. You could hardly make out, through the stifling vapor, the other side of this huge hole, one thousand five hundred meters wide, whose straight wall drove down to the mysterious and terrible land of fire.

Everything around us was strange. Sicily was hidden under mists that ended at the edge of the coast, concealing only the land, so that we seemed to be up in the heavens, as it were, above the seas, the clouds, so very high that the Mediterranean spread out on all sides as far as the eye could reach, looking like part of the very sky itself. The azure enveloped us on all sides. We were standing on an extraordinary mountain, that had come out of the clouds and was bathed in the sky, stretched above our heads, about our feet, everywhere.

But by degrees the shadows over the islands rose about us, inclosing very soon the immense volcano in a circle of vapors, an abyss of clouds. It was our turn to be in the bottom of an altogether white crater, from the depths of which we could see only the blue sky, far above our heads.

But on other days the spectacle is entirely different.

We awaited the rising of the sun, which appeared from behind the hills of Calabria. These threw out

their shadow on the sea, as far as the foot of Mount Etna, whose dark silhouette covered Sicily with its immense triangle, disappearing as the sun ascended in the sky. There then came to light before us a panorama four hundred kilometers in diameter and one thousand three hundred in circumference, with Italy at the north and the Lipari Islands also; whose two volcanoes looked as if they were saluting their sire, while toward the south, barely visible, we saw Malta. In the harbors of Sicily the ships had the appearance of insects on the sea.

Alexandre Dumas *père* has given an excellent and very enthusiastic description of this spectacle.

After returning to Catania we left next day for Syracuse.

This is the city with which one ought to wind up an excursion in Sicily. It was as illustrious at one time as any of the larger towns; its tyrants rendered their reigns as celebrated as that of Nero; it produces a wine which poets have made famous; it has at the head of the bay it overlooks a very small river, the Anapo, where grows the papyrus, the secret guardian of our thoughts; and it holds within its walls the most beautiful of Venuses.

Some people cross continents to go on a pilgrimage to a miraculous statue—as for me, I came here to worship at the shrine of the Venus of Syracuse.

It was in the album of a traveler that I saw the picture of this sublime woman. It was she, probably, who induced me to take this trip; I dreamed of her, I spoke of her incessantly, long before seeing her.

I wandered through the town, which is built on a island and separated from the land by three walls,



between which pass three arms of the sea. It is small, pretty, as it sits on the banks of the gulf, with gardens and walks that lead to the water.

Then we went to the Latomias, immense roofless excavations, which were originally stone quarries, but had become prisons, where, for eight months after the defeat of Nicias, the captured Athenians were confined, tortured by hunger and the horrible heat of these caldrons, swarming with vermin, where they lay in agony.

In one of these, the Latomia of Paradise, we noticed, way in the bottom of the grotto, a peculiar opening, called the ear of Dionysius, who it is said came to listen at the hole, to hear the groanings of his victims. There are other versions, too. Certain ingenious learned men assert that this grotto, when put in communication with this theater, was used as a subterranean hall for performances, to which it lent an echo that was prodigiously sonorous; for the slightest noises are surprisingly magnified.

The most remarkable of the Latomias is assuredly that of the Capuchins, a vast and deep garden divided by vaults, arches, and enormous rocks, and is inclosed in white cliffs.

After visiting the Catacombs, whose area covers five hundred acres, we then entered the modest hotel, which overlooks the sea, and we sat up late, idly watching the red and green lights of the ships in the harbor.

On entering the museum I saw her (the Venus) at the other end of the hall, and she was just as beautiful as I had imagined her.

She has no head, and one of her arms is missing, but never has the human form appeared to me more admirable and enticing.

It was not a poetical woman, an idealized woman, nor was it a divine or majestic woman, like the Venus de Milo, but it was a real woman, a woman such as you love, such as you desire, a woman you would fain clasp in your arms.

She had a large frame, well-developed breasts, powerful hips, and rather heavy limbs; she was a carnal Venus, whom one pictures lying down as she stands erect before one's gaze. One arm covered her breasts; with the other one she covered herself most mysteriously with an exquisitely charming gesture. The whole attitude of the body was conceived and executed to show the grace of this movement; the lines all seemed to concentrate here. This simple and natural gesture, full of modesty and of lasciviousness also, which hid and revealed at the same time, attracting and concealing, seems to define in truth the attitude of the feminine sex upon earth.

And the marble itself seems to live. One would like to touch it, so convinced one is that it would give under pressure like living flesh.

The hips, especially, are inexpressibly beautiful. The undulating line of the feminine back, which curves from the neck to the heels, unfolded itself with great charm, showing in the contour of the shoulders, in the decreasing roundness of the limbs, in the slight curve of the insteps, all the modulations of human grace.

A work of art is superior only in the case when it expresses at one and the same time a symbol and the exact reproduction of a reality.

The Venus of Syracuse is a woman, and is also a symbol of the flesh.

Before the head of the Joconda one is beset by I know not what enervating and mystical temptation

of love. There are also women living whose eyes give us that dream of unrealized and mysterious tender affections. We expect to find in them something else beyond what really does exist, because they seem to embody something of that ideal which is, perhaps, unattainable. Still we pursue it without success, now in and beyond the surprises furnished by beauty, again in the depth of glances that are only shades of blue, in the charm of smiles that come from the curve of the lips and a flash of ivory, or in the grace of an attitude born of chance and the harmony of the lines of the figure.

In this way have poets forever been tortured by the thirst of a mystical love. The natural exaltation of a truly poetical soul, exasperated by artistic excitement, compels those favored beings to conceive a kind of cloudy love, desperately tender, ecstatic in its perpetual state of hunger, as it were, sensual though not carnal, so very frail that a breath will cause it to vanish, so unrealizable and superhuman it must be. And these poets are, perhaps, the only men who never have really loved a woman, a real woman of flesh and blood, with her womanly qualities and defects, her limited and charming mind, her feminine nerves, and her disquieting femininity.

Any creature that causes a dreamy exaltation on their part is to them the symbol of a mysterious but enchanted being: the being they sing of, like true singers of illusions that they are. This living adored one is somewhat like a painted statue, the image of a god before whom people kneel. Where is that God? Who is that God? In what part of the heavens does this Unknown live, which they have all worshiped, these thoughtless ones, each and every one of them? As soon as they touch a hand respond-

ing to their pressure, then their soul takes flight in an invisible dream, far from the carnal reality.

The woman they clasp is transformed, perfected, or disfigured by their artistic poetry. It is not her lips they really kiss, but those they have dreamed of. It is not in the depths of her blue or black eyes that their feverish glances sink, but into the great unattainable unknown, the aim of all their dreams. The eye of their mistress is only the glass through which they attempt to catch a glimpse of the paradise of love.

But if some women, who happen to be both bewitching and bewildering, can give our souls this rare illusion, others again only excite in us the impetuous love from which the race is perpetuated.

The Venus of Syracuse is the personification of this powerful beauty, wholesome and simple. This admirable torso, in Parian marble, is, we are told, the Venus Callipygus, described by Athenæus and Lampridedius, which was given by Heliogabalus to the people of Syracuse.

It has no head! What difference does it make? Its symbol is only the more complete. It is the body of a woman that expresses all the real poetry of a caress.

Schopenhauer has said that nature, wishing to perpetuate the species, has made a snare of reproduction.

This marble figure, seen in Syracuse, is truly the human snare divined by the ancient artist, the woman who conceals and reveals the disquieting mystery of life.

Is this a snare? Very well, then! It attracts the lips, the touch of the hand, giving to kisses the per-

ceptible reality of white and buoyant flesh, so firm and rounded, delightful to clasp.

It is divine, not because it renders an idea, but because it is beautiful.

And one recalls, also, on beholding her, the bronze ram of Syracuse, the most beautiful piece of statuary in the museum of Palermo, which seems to be the embodiment of the whole world's animality. The powerful beast is lying down, the body rests on the legs, the head is slightly turned to the left. You would take this animal's head for that of a god, a bestial god, carnal and superb. The forehead is broad and high, the eyes are set wide apart, the nose is long, well rounded and thick, and it presents a prodigiously brutish expression. The horns, which are thrown back, fall, rounded and curved, with their sharp points parted under the thin ears, which also somewhat resemble horns. And the animal's glance impresses you with its stupid, uneasy, and hard look. On reaching this bronze we feel as if in the presence of a wild animal.

On leaving the museum I gave one more loving look toward the marble figure, a look such as we give the beloved one at parting, and I immediately embarked to go and pay my respects to the papyrus of the river Anapo, as all writers should do.

We crossed the gulf from one side to the other, and on the flat and bare shore we saw the mouth of a very small river, where the boat entered.

The current was strong and hard to pull against. Sometimes the men were obliged to row, and others to use poles, to make us glide over the water, which ran rapidly between banks covered with small, bright, yellow flowers—two banks of gold.

Here were reeds, which rustled as we touched



them, which bent and rose, and there, with their roots in water, were deep blue irises, on which fluttered innumerable dragonflies with glassy wings, pearl-like and quivering. Some of these flies were almost as large as humming-birds. Over there, now, on both the slopes that imprisoned us, grew giant thistles and blind weeds, weaving together the plants of the land and the reeds of the stream.

Beneath us, deep in the water, was a forest of tall, waving grasses which moved about, floated, and looked as if they were swimming in the current that forever tossed them about.

Then the river Anapo became separated from the ancient Cyane, its tributary, and we were still moving on between the two banks, by means of our poles. The stream wound in and out, giving delightful views, perspectives which were both blossoming and charming. An island loomed up finally, covered with strange bushes. The frail and triangular stems, eight or nine feet high, bore at the top round clusters of green threads that were long, soft, flexible like human hairs. They gave one the impression of human heads that had been turned into plants, which might have been thrown into this sacred stream by one of the pagan deities who lived here in days gone by. And this was the very ancient papyrus.

The peasants call this reed the *parruca*.

And far in the distance you may see many more, a whole forest of them. They quiver, rustle, bend in every direction; their hairy heads become entangled, and they always look as if they were speaking about unknown and mysterious things.

Is it not strange that this wonderful plant, which brought to our minds the remembrance of the dead,

which was the guardian of human gains, should have on its ancient body an enormous mane of thick and flowing hair, such as is worn by the poets of to-day?

We returned to Syracuse as the sun was about to set, and we gazed at the steamer, just arrived, which was to carry us away that very night toward Africa.



## CHAPTER V

### FROM ALGIERS TO TUNIS



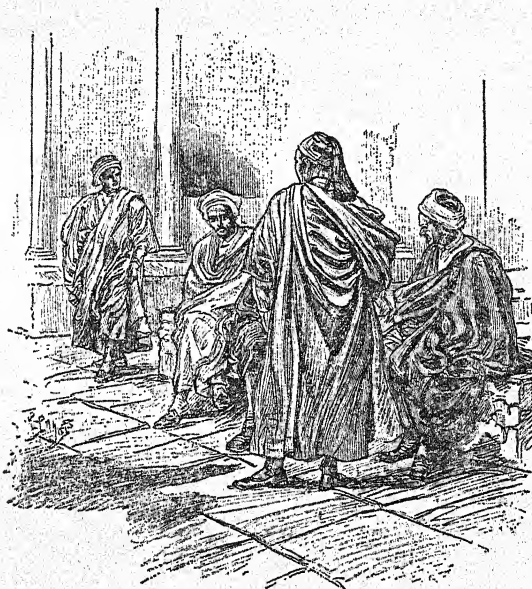
N the wharves of Algiers, in the streets of the village of natives, on the plains of the Tell, on the mountains of the Sahel, on the sands of the Sahara, are men clothed in robes resembling those of monks; and, their heads cowed in a turban, which floats behind them, with stern features and steady glance, these men look as if they belonged to some austere religious order, spread over half the globe.

Their walk even is that of priests; their gestures, those of men who preach; their attitude is that of mystics full of contempt for the world.

We are, in fact, among men dominated by the religious idea, which effaces all else, regulates their actions, decides their conscience,

forms their hearts, governs their thoughts, is above all earthly interests, all preoccupation, all excitement.

Religion is the great source of inspiration for their actions, their souls, their qualities, and their faults. It is for her sake that they are good, brave, tender-hearted, and faithful, for they seem to be



nothing in themselves, to possess qualities which are only inspired or commended by their faith.

Let us go and see them praying in their white mosque, which we can see in the distance, at the end of the wharf of Algiers.

In the first courtyard, under an arcade of small green, blue, or red columns, men, seated or lying down, were conversing in low tones with the tranquil gravity of Orientals. Facing the entrance at the

back of a small square room, which looked like a chapel, the *cadi*, a Turkish judge, administered justice. Plaintiffs awaited their turn, seated on the benches; a kneeling Arab was speaking, while the magistrate sat enveloped, almost hidden, in the numerous folds of his garments and the massiveness of his turban, with only part of his face peering out, looking at the plaintiff with a stern and calm glance and listening to him. A wall, in which was set a small grated window, divided this apartment from that where the women, who are considered much less important than men, and who are not allowed the face the *cadi*, are awaiting their turn to make complaints through the little wicket.

The sun, which fell in showers of fire on the snow-white walls of these small buildings, similar to tombs of marabouts, and on the courtyard, where an old woman was throwing dead fish to an army of black and yellow cats, was reflected in the interior on the burnouses, the lean brown limbs and impassive faces. Only a few steps away was the school, by the side of a fountain, where the water flowed beneath a tree. Everything was here within these calm and peaceful walls—religion, justice, learning.

I entered the mosque after taking off my shoes; then I stepped over the rugs in the midst of the bright columns whose regular lines filled this quiet temple, which was deep and low. For these columns were very wide, with one side facing toward the Mecca, so that each believer, standing in front of it, would see nothing, would not be distracted, and, with eyes turned to the Holy City, become absorbed in prayer.

There were a few who knelt; others, standing up, mumbled formulas from the Koran, carefully ob-



serving instructions as to the various prescribed positions; others again, having performed their religious duties, conversed together, sitting on the ground along the walls; for the mosque is not only a place of prayer, but also one of rest, where they tarry, sometimes remaining for days at a time.

Everything is plain, bare, and white. All is peaceful and quiet in these houses of faith, so different from our churches, which are so full of animation when crowded, with the noise of the services, the moving about of assistants, the pomp of ceremonies, and the singing; and then, again, when they are empty, how sad they become, and how they oppress the heart, looking like a death-chamber, like a cold room of stone, where the Crucified One is still agonizing.

The Arabs entered at all times of the day, the poor and the rich, the ancient chief, the man of noble birth, in the silky whiteness of his shining burnous. Each one, barefooted, performed the same rites, prayed to the same God, with the same devout and simple faith, without ostentatious affection or even the slightest distraction. They remained standing at first, with head up, opened hands raised on the same level with their shoulders, in an attitude of entreaty. Then their arms fell by their side, and their heads were bent; they were before the Sovereign of the world, in an attitude of resignation. They then joined their hands across the breast. They were now captives to the will of the Master. Finally they prostrated themselves several times, very quickly and noiselessly. After sitting on their heels with hands outstretched on their knees, they bent forward to the ground, which they touched with their forehead.

This prayer is always the same and begins with the recital of the first verses of the Koran; it must be repeated five times a day by the faithful, who, before entering, have washed their face, hands, and feet.

Throughout the silent temple nothing could be heard but the murmur of the running water in the interior court, through which the light fell in the mosque. The shadow of the fig tree that grew above the fountain where they made their ablutions threw a green reflection on the plaited mats at the door.

The Mussulman women may enter as well as the men, though they seldom do. God is too far away, too high, altogether too imposing, for them. They would not dare to tell Him their troubles, confide in Him, ask of Him the help, consolation, and relief for their families, husbands, and children which the heart of all women craves for. They need an intercessor between Him who is great and their humble selves. This function is filled by the Turkish "marabout," or the priest, as we say.

It is, then, at the tomb of their saint, in the small chapel where he is buried, that we shall find the Arabian woman in prayer.

The Zaouia Abd-er-Rahman-el-Tealbi is the most original and interesting in Algiers. The name *zaouia* is given to a small mosque joined to a *koubba* (a marabout's tomb), containing also a school and a higher course of study for the educated Mussulman.

To reach the Zaouia of Abd-er-Rahman one must cross the whole city. It is an extraordinary climb, through a labyrinth of lanes, tangled and winding between the windowless walls of Moorish houses. They almost meet at the top and the sky.

All along these narrow corridors, at the foot of the houses, men lay sleeping in tattered garments; others filled the Moorish cafés, seated on circular benches or on the ground, always with a stolid face, drinking out of very small china cups. We saw, through the open doors, the interior courts, which gave now and then a fresh breath of wind. And there was the same familiar square well, surrounded by a colonnade upholding galleries. A sound of soft and strange music escaped once in a while from these houses, from which could often be seen women emerging, two by two. They seemed to cast a sad and gloomy look, like that of prisoners, as they passed us.

They all wore a headdress, much like that with which the Virgin Mary is represented to us, made of a piece of cloth tightly bound about the head; their bodies were covered with the *haik*, and their lower limbs were incased in the wide trousers of linen or calico, which were very narrow at the ankle, and gave them a peculiar walk, slow and awkward, full of hesitancy; and we tried to make out their features under their veils which cling very closely and brought out their most salient parts. The two bluish curves of the eyebrows, lengthened by a dash of antimony, extend far over the temples.

Suddenly I heard voices calling me. I turned and, through the open door, I perceived, on the walls, large and improper paintings, such as are sometimes found in Pompeii. The loose morals that prevailed, the joyous, disorderly crowd, crudely daring in shamelessness, even in the streets, showed the great difference between the European sense of decency and that of the Orientals.

And yet we must not forget that it is only a few

years ago since the performances of Caragissa, a kind of obscene Punch and Judy, were forbidden. Children witnessed these scenes and looked on with their big black eyes, some ignorant and others already corrupt, laughing and applauding the improbable and vile exploits, which were absolutely indescribable.

All through the upper part of this Arabian town, between the dry-goods shops, the groceries, and fruitstands of the incorruptible Mozabites—Mohammedan Puritans, whom the slightest contact with other men may contaminate and who, in such cases, upon their return home must undergo a long purification—are places where traffic in human beings is carried on, where in every tongue one is invited to enter. The Mozabite alone, seated in his little shop, with his wares carefully exposed around him, appears to see nothing, to know and understand nothing, that goes on about him.

On his right the Spanish women coo, after the fashion of doves; on his left, the Arabian women miow like cats. He looks, in the midst of them, between the impure nude pictures painted on both those houses to attract the customers, like a fakir, a seller of fruit, in a hypnotic dream.

I turned to the right by a small passage, which appeared to end at the sea, spreading out in the distance behind the point of Saint-Eugène, and I saw at the end of this tunnel, a few steps below me, a gem of a mosque, or, rather, a very small zaouia, a series of small buildings, and square, round, and pointed tombstones, ranged along a staircase winding from terrace to terrace.

The entrance was concealed by a wall which one would say was built of silvery snow, framed with

bricks of green tiles, and perforated here and there with openings through which the harbor of Algiers could be seen.

I entered. Beggars, old men, women, and children, were seated on every step, asking alms in Arabic. In the right, in a small structure, also crowned with tiles, was the first vault where, through the open door, we saw the faithful seated before the tomb. Farther down was the rounded and glittering dome of the *koubba* of the marabout Abd-er-Rahman, next to the tall and thin square minaret from which the call to prayer is made.

From the last terrace, at the entrance of the marabout, the view was delightful. Our Lady of Africa in the distance overlooked Saint-Eugène, and the sea stretched out to the horizon, where it mingled with the sky. Nearer to the right was the Arabian town, climbing from roof to roof, to the Zaouia, and farther beyond it, displaying its little houses of chalk. All about me were tombs, a cypress, a fig tree, and Moorish ornaments framing and crowning the sacred walls.

Having taken off my shoes, I entered the *koubba*. The first person I met, in a small room, was a learned Mussulman, seated on his heels, reading a manuscript, which he held on a level with his eyes. Books and parchments were spread about him on rugs. He did not so much as turn his head.

A little farther, I heard a rustling and whispering. As I drew nearer, the women, all sitting about the tomb, covered their faces quickly. They looked like enormous snow statues wherein shone bright eyes. They were at home in their saint's dwelling, which they had decorated—for God is too far away for them, too great for their humble souls.



They whispered and talked in a low voice among themselves, and some related to the marabout their anxieties, their affairs, their quarrels, and their troubles with their husbands. It was as an intimate and familiar gathering of friends gossiping around this relic.

The whole chapel was filled with their strange gifts: clocks of all sizes, which kept time, ticking the seconds and striking the hours; votive banners, hanging lamps of all descriptions, in bronze and crystal. They were so numerous that one could not see the ceiling. They swung side by side, in different sizes, as in a lamp-maker's shop. The walls were decorated with graceful tiles of charming designs, in which red and green seemed to be the predominating colors. The floor was covered with rugs, and the light came from the cupola through a group of three arched windows, one of these being above the other two.

This was not the stern-looking and bare mosque where God is alone; it was a boudoir for prayer, that had been decorated with the childish taste of uncivilized women. Very often lovers come here to see each other, to make an appointment, or to say a few words in secret. Europeans that can speak their language often become attached to these indolent and enveloped creatures, whose eyes alone can be seen.

When the marabout's masculine contingent comes in its turn to perform its devotions, it does not pay the same exclusive attention to the saint occupying this place. After bowing profoundly to the tomb, the men turn toward Mecca and worship God—for there is no other divinity but God—as they repeat in all their prayers.



## CHAPTER VI

### TUNIS



THE railroad passes through a beautiful country of wooded mountains before reaching Tunis. It penetrates into Tunisia by the Kronmiria, after climbing up to a height of seven hundred and four meters, where it overlooks an immense and gorgeous landscape.

Then a series of deserted hills and valleys is unrolled, where Roman cities formerly stood. There are first the remains of Thagasta, where Saint Augustine was born.

Farther on is Thubursicum Numidarum, whose ruins cover a succession of green, rounded hills. Farther still is Madarus, where Apuleius was born, toward the end of the Trajan's reign.

After many weary hours of riding we perceived in the low plain the tall arches of an aqueduct cut

away in some places and almost destroyed, which formerly extended from one mountain to the other. It was the aqueduct of Carthage, of which Flaubert speaks in his *Salammbô*. We passed a beautiful village, then followed a dazzling lake, and the walls of Tunis loomed into sight.

We finally entered the town. To get a good general view of its panorama, we were obliged to climb a neighboring hill. The Arabs compare Tunis to a burnous spread out, and this comparison is very apt. The city stretches over the plain, raised slightly by the undulations of the ground, which causes houses to project here and there, and also the domes of mosques and belfries of the minarets. It is difficult to believe that these are houses, so compact and even is this endless strip of white. Around the town are three lakes that glitter like plains of steel under the powerful Oriental sun. To the north, in the distance, the Sebkra-er-Bouan; to the west, the Sebkra-Seldjoun; to the south, Lake Bahira; then, if you go northward again, you will perceive the sea, the deep gulf, which looks like a lake in its frame of distant mountains.

On a bright, sunny day, this city lying among all these lakes, in a land inclosed by mountains, the highest of which (Zagh-ouan) is nearly always seen covered with mist in winter, is the most striking sight, without doubt, to be seen on the borders of the African Continent.

Tunis is divided into three distinct sections: the French, the Arab, the Jewish.

But Tunis is, in fact, neither French nor Arabian, it is decidedly Jewish. It is one of the rare places on the earth where the Jew seems at home, as if he were in his own country, where he is out-

wardly almost the master, where he shows a tranquil assurance, though still somewhat uncertain.

Where are we? Is this Arabian soil, or the dazzling capital of a harlequin—a very artistic harlequin, too, a friend of the painters, an inimitable colorist who has taken pleasure in dressing his people in an amazing and stunning manner. He must have passed through London, Paris, and St. Petersburg, this wonderful costumer, and returning here, full of contempt for the northern races, has dressed his subjects in these motley colors, with an unerring taste and a fancy that knew no bounds. Not only has he given their garments every original and graceful shape possible, but he has used to color them all the shades that ever have been created, blended, dreamed of, by the most fastidious painter of aquarelles.

To the Jews alone he has allowed the loud tones, forbidding, though, the too brutal clashing of these, adjusting the splendor of their costumes with a prudent daring. As for the Moors, his favorites, whether they are quiet merchants seated in their shops, active young men, or corpulent citizens walking slowly through the streets, he took pleasure in clothing them with such a variety of coloring that the eye is dazzled by them. Oh! for these, for his good Orientals, his Levantines, half Turks and half Arabs, he has blended such delicate shades, so soft, so gentle, so dim and harmonious, that to walk among them is a constant delight to the eye.

There are burnouses of shimmering cashmere, like streamers of light; there are gorgeous rags, alongside of *gebbas* of silk, long tunics that fall to the knee, and small jackets worn over a vest, with innumerable buttons all along the edges.

And all these *gebbas*, vests, jackets, and *haïks* are blended in such a manner that they show the most wonderfully delicate colorings. They are pink, azure, blue, lilac, Nile green, deep blue, leafy brown, salmon-pink, orange, faded mauve, wine-color, and slate-gray.

Frequently the narrow passageways are well-nigh obstructed by enormous creatures, whose hips and shoulders seem about to touch both walls as they advance. On their heads towers a pointed covering, often silvered or gilt, a sort of magician's bonnet, from behind which flutters a scarf. On their monstrously huge bodies, a mass of quivering flesh, they wear loose bodices of bright colors. Their misshapen calves are imprisoned in white trousers that cling to them. Their stockings seem to be inflated by fat; when in gala dress, gaiters of cloth of gold or silver are worn. They walk with mincing steps in half sandals, which they drag after them, for the foot is only half shod, and the heels strike the ground. These strange, bloated creatures are the Jewesses, the beautiful Jewesses!

As soon as they approach the marriageable age, and when the rich men begin to court them, the daughters of Israel dream of becoming stouter and stouter; for the heavier a woman is the more she is sought after, and the greater chance has she of choosing a husband of her own liking. At fourteen or fifteen they are slender of figure and marvels of beauty, refinement, and charm.

Their paleness, almost sickly in appearance, their delicately luminous complexion, their refined features, those soft features of an ancient and exhausted race, whose blood has never been rejuvenated; their dark eyes under their white fore-



heads, shadowed by their black, heavy, and thick masses of fluffy hair; and their graceful walk, as they slipped from door to door, filled the Jewish quarter of Tunis with a vision of bewitching little Salomes.

Then they begin to think of a husband. And then begins this inconceivable fattening of the body which will eventually make monsters of them. After eating every morning the little ball of herbs that stimulate the stomach, they remain motionless for the whole day, eating thick pastes which swell them to an enormous size. The breasts become inflated, the waists distended, and the hips increase proportionately, while the outline of the wrists and ankles disappears under the astonishing excess of flesh. And amateurs flock to see them, to judge, compare, and admire them, as they would in an animal show. It is this that makes them beautiful, attractive, and charming, these immensely enormous marriageable girls!

Then you see them pass by, these extraordinary beings, wearing a headdress in the shape of a sharp cone, called the *konfit*, from which hangs the bechkir, dressed in the flowing *camiza* in plain linen, or in brilliant silks, with trousers sometimes white, again richly embroidered, and with trailing slippers called *saba*; they are astonishing-looking creatures, whose faces are sometimes pretty in spite of their forms, which resemble the shape of a hippopotamus.

In the Arabian part of the town the most interesting quarter is that of the *souks*, in which are long streets arched and roofed with boards, which the sun pierces with blades of fire that seem to cut in two the people as they pass by. These are the

bazaars, winding and crossing one another, where sellers, standing or seated in the midst of their wares, in little covered shops, call loudly for buyers; others squat motionless among heaps of rags, of colored stuffs, leathers, bridles, harness, saddles, embroidered in gold and yellow, and red-beaded Turkish slippers.

Each corporation has its street, and along the galleries, separated by a thin partition, the men of the same trades are grouped together, all working with the same movements. It is impossible to describe the animation, the coloring, and liveliness of these markets, for no one could ever express in words the glare, the noise, and commotion.

One of these *souks* is of such a very peculiar character that the memory of it remains like a dream. It is the perfume shop.

In compartments so narrow that they remind one of the cells of bees, in a line from one end to the other, on both sides of a rather dark gallery, men with fair complexions, most of them quite young, are clad in light garments and seated like Buddhist idols, rigidly stiff and still in a framework which is fastened on the shoulders; this framework, forming some mystical design about the head, is fitted with tapers.

The higher ones are short, those about the shoulders are longer, and those over the arms are longer still. And still, however, these symmetric decorations vary somewhat with the different shops. The sellers, pale and motionless, seem to be like wax figures in this chapel of wax tapers. About their knees or their feet, or again within reach of their hands, are all perfumes imaginable, some inclosed in small boxes, in tiny vials, or even in little bags.

An odor of incense and aromatic plants penetrates the air from one end of the section to the other.

Some of these extracts are very expensive and are sold by drops, which they count by means of a small piece of cotton, which the seller takes from his ear and puts back there.

When night comes the whole quarter of the *souks* is closed with heavy doors at the entrance to each of these galleries, like a valuable treasure-house inclosed within another.

A French officer, having a special warrant, offered to let us see some houses of ill repute, a privilege seldom granted to strangers.

We had to be accompanied by a special guard from the police of the Bey, otherwise not even the lowest native brothel would have been open to us.

The Arabian quarter of the city of Algiers is usually full of animation at night. But Tunis is a dead town as soon as night comes on. The small narrow streets, winding and uneven, seem like the corridors of a deserted city, where a few gas jets, here and there, have been forgotten.

We wended our way for quite a long time through this labyrinth, and finally entered a Jewish house, where three women were performing the *danse du ventre*. This dance is not at all graceful, and is attractive only to amateurs, according to the perfection of the performers' technique, so to speak. Three sisters, very elaborately dressed and made up, were going through immodest contortions under the encouraging glance of their mother, an enormous ball of living fat, who wore a headdress of gilt paper and begged for the general fund of the house-

hold after each nervous crisis of her daughters. In different parts of this parlor were three opened doors, leading to rooms in which could be seen low couches. I opened a fourth door, and I saw a woman lying down who seemed to be really beautiful. They all fell upon me as I peeped in at her, mother, dancers, two negro servants, and a man who had been in hiding behind the curtain, watching his sisters' performance. It seemed she was the legitimate wife of this last-named person, and the daughter and sister-in-law of these abandoned women. To soften the effect of their rude and peremptory manner in blocking my way into the aforesaid room, they showed me the first child of this woman, a child only three or four years of age, who was already learning the *danse du ventre*.

I went away thoroughly disgusted.

After much delay and precaution, I was allowed to enter the dwelling of some of the fashionable Arabian courtesans. We had to wait at the end of the street, and were admitted only after a great deal of parleying and threatening—for if the natives knew that foreigners entered their homes, they would be abandoned, considered as disgraced and dishonored. I saw some fine girls, fairly good-looking, in wretched rooms filled with long mirrors.

We were thinking about returning to our hotel when the policeman offered to show us another place of interest, if such a word can here be used.

And we were again groping after him in never-to-be-forgotten dark lanes, lighting matches in order to see, stumbling into holes, striking the houses either with shoulder or hand, and hearing voices sometimes or sounds of music, the clamor of wild revels coming through the walls, as if from a dis-

tance, fearful in their muffled mysteriousness. We were now in the heart of this infamous district.

We stopped in front of a house which the policeman entered, saying to us, "Follow me." We did so, going down three steps into a low room, where three or four little children were asleep on rugs along the walls—they were little Arabs, the children of the household. An old woman, one of those hideous natives that are nothing but moving things that move about in ugly yellow rags, from which emerges a witchlike head, ugly and tattooed, tried to stop our advance. But the other door had been shut, and we entered another room where a few men obstructed the opening leading still farther, and all were listening in a religious silence to the harsh sounds going on within. The officer entered first, motioning the *habitués* aside, and we finally reached a long narrow room, where a great many Arabs were seated on boards on both sides of the long white wall extending from one end of the room to the other.

There, on a large French bedstead, which was almost as wide as the room itself, a pyramid of Arabs could be seen.

In front of them, at the foot of the bed, facing us, too, next to a small mahogany table containing glasses, bottles of beer, coffee cups, and small pewter spoons, four women were seated, singing an endless monotonous southern melody, which a few Jewish musicians accompanied on their instruments.

The women were dressed sumptuously, like fairy princesses, and one of them, a girl about fifteen years of age, was so surprisingly beautiful that her loveliness lighted up this strange place.

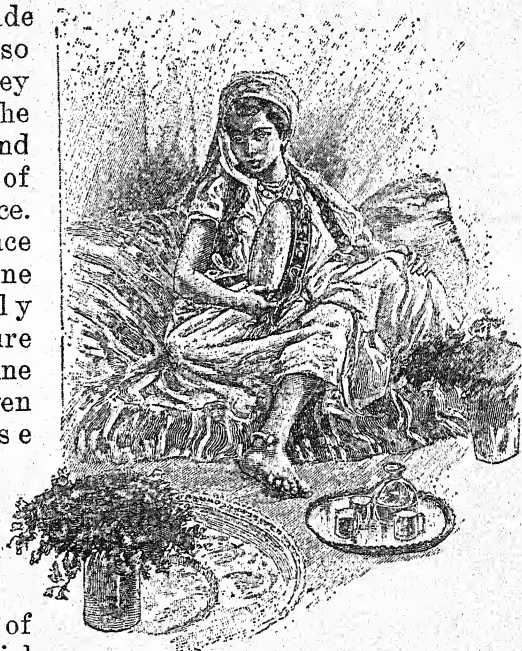
Her hair was held back under a scarf of gold



which went from one side to the other. Under this straight metallic band her eyes appeared large, with a staring, unfeeling look, unfathomable even—two black eyes set well apart and separated by an ideal little nose stopping just above a small baby mouth, that only opened to sing. It was an expressionless face, of a wonderful regularity of lines, primitive, but superb, made up of lines so simple that they seemed to be the natural and unique traits of this human face.

In every face one meets, one could easily alter a feature here or a line there, or even replace these with some part taken from some other person. But in the head of this young girl you never would

care to change anything, so perfect and typical was her face. The smooth forehead, the nose, the cheeks, so beautifully molded and coming to a point at the chin, were framed in a perfect oval of a somewhat brown skin; the only eyes, the only nose and mouth which could possibly fit in were there also. They are



the ideal of a conception of absolute beauty with which our eyes are satisfied. Next to her was another young girl, charming also, but not so beautiful, one of those milk-white faces. On either side of these stars two other women were seated, of a low type, with short necks and prominent cheekbones, two nomad prostitutes; those wretched creatures, picked up and abandoned on the road by some tribe, where they are taken some day by a troop of "spahis" who bring them into town.

They sang, beating time on the *darbouda*, with hands reddened by henbane (a substance having the same properties as opium), while the Jewish musicians played on small guitars, tambourines, and shrill flutes.

Every one listened without saying a word, with never a laugh, and with most august and solemn countenances.

Where were we? In the temple of some barbarous religion or in a house of ill repute?

In a house of ill repute. Yes, indeed, and nothing in the world ever gave me so unexpected, vivid, and refreshing a sensation, as when I entered this long, low room, where these girls, adorned, one would say, as for a sacred festival, awaited the caprice of one of those solemn-looking men, who seem to be muttering words from the Koran in the midst of their debauchery.

One of them was pointed out to me, as he sat with his tiny cup of coffee, his eyes raised as if in deep meditation. He it was who had retained the idol, and nearly all the others were guests. He offered them refreshments and music and the sight of this beautiful girl until the time when he would ask them to retire. And they will bow to him in a very

respectful way as they file out. He was handsome, this man who showed such good taste, and also tall, with the diaphanous skin of the city Arab, which showed still clearer, owing to a black beard, shining and silky, growing somewhat thin on the cheeks.



## CHAPTER VII

### ON THE ROAD TO KAIRWAN

*December 11th.*



WE left Tunis by a beautiful road leading along a small hill, followed a lake for a short time, and then crossed a plain. The wide horizon, inclosed by mountains with misty summits, was quite bare, only spotted

here and there with white villages, in which, from a distance, we could see, overlooking the indistinct mass of houses, the tall, pointed minarets and small domes of the *koubbas*. Throughout this fanatical land we see these shining little domes of *koubbas*, whether in the fertile plains of Algeria or Tunisia or as a beacon on the top of the mountains; far back in forests of cedars or pines, on the edge of deep ravines, or in thickets of mastic or cork trees; sometimes in the yellow desert with two date trees leaning over them, one on the left and one on the right, throwing on the milk-white

cupola the faint and delicate shade of their palms.

They contain, as a sacred seed, the bones of marabouts, which have impregnated the limitless soil belonging to the faith of Mahomet, and have caused to germinate from Tangiers to Timbuctoo, from Cairo to Mecca, from Tunis to Constantinople, and from Khartoum to Java, the most powerful, the most mysteriously domineering of all religions that have mastered the human conscience.

For a long time we went along at the full speed of four horses driven abreast, through endless plains planted with vines or sown with cereals just beginning to sprout.

Then, suddenly, the beautiful road, built on bridges and embankments since the French occupation, came abruptly to an end. A small bridge had broken down during the last rains, because it was too weak to resist the torrent of water coming down from the mountain. We had much difficulty in going down into the ravine, and the carriage finally ascending on the other side, we regained the highway, one of the principal arteries of Tunisia, as they say in official language. For a few kilometers we went at full speed again, until we struck another small bridge, which had also given way under pressure of the waters. Then a little farther on it was the bridge instead that remained standing; it was evidently indestructible and looked like a small triumphal arch, while on both sides of it the road had been washed away, forming an abyss about this ruin, which itself looked quite new.

Toward noontime we perceived in front of us a singular construction. It stood on the edge of the road, which had all but disappeared, and was an agglomeration of small houses joined together and



barely reaching a man's height. They were sheltered under a continuous line of roofs, some of which were a little higher than the others, giving this strange village the appearance of a series of tombs. On these roofs a few white dogs jumped about, barking at us.

This hamlet is called Gorombalia; it was founded by an Andalusian Mahometan chief, Mahomet Gorombali, who was sent into exile by Isabella the Catholic.

After a few hours' difficult traveling, we entered a large stretch of undulating ground, with the earth crevassed by ravines, and here and there lay the shining bones of some carcass, or a half-devoured carrion left there by the birds of prey or the dogs. For fifteen months not a drop of rain had fallen on this land, and half the animals died of hunger. Their skeletons were everywhere, infecting the air, and giving to these plains the look of a barren country parched by the sun and laid waste by a plague. The dogs alone were fat, having been fed on this putrefied flesh.

It is strange to think that this soil, which has been charred for two years by a pitiless sun, drowned for a month under a deluge of rain, will be toward March and April a boundless prairie with grass as high as a man's shoulder and innumerable year during the rainy season the whole of Tunisia goes through, within a few months of each other, the most frightful aridity and the most flourishing fertility.

This land is cultivated in a very peculiar manner by the Arabs. They occupy either the white villages, seen here and there, or *gourbis*, huts made of branches, or brown tents, shaped like enormous

mushrooms, hidden in dried brushwood or forests of cactus. When the last harvest has been plentiful they decide early to till the ground, but when the drought has caused them almost to starve, they wait for the first rains to risk their last seeds, or to borrow from the government the seeds, which are usually granted to them without much difficulty. Then, too, as soon as the heavy autumn showers have softened the earth they go to the *cadi* who holds sway over the fertile territory, or to the new European landowner, who often rents the land dearer but at least does not rob them, and who administers justice in their dealings and their debates—a justice which is not venal—and they point out the land chosen by them, which they stake and lease for one season only, and then they go ahead to till their part of the land.

And what an extraordinary sight it is! Every time we leave a dry stone region behind and we enter a fruitful section, from afar we can see the peculiar silhouettes of camels harnessed to the plows. The tall, fantastic-looking beast drags with slow steps the mean-looking implement of wood which the Arab, clothed in a simple shirt, pushes before him. Very soon the astonishing groups grow more numerous as we reach the choice sections. The camel is now replaced by cows, asses, and sometimes by women. We met one, coupled with a donkey, and she pulled as hard as the beast, while the husband pushed and urged them both on.

The Arab's furrow is not at all like the beautiful, deep, and straight furrow of the European laborer, but a kind of festoon even with the ground, which winds capriciously around the jujube trees. This lazy farmer never stops nor stoops to tear up an

obnoxious weed in his way. He avoids a round-about turn, showing great regard for it, inclosing it within the winding circuit of his tilling, as if it were some very precious, sacred plant. Consequently, their fields are full of weeds, some of them so small that a twist of the hand would pull them up.

In this quiet indifference, this regard for the plant already grown in God's earth, the fatalist soul of the Oriental shows itself. If that weed grew there, then the Master willed it so, evidently. Why undo His work and destroy it? Why take so much trouble, why go to any effort to increase one's fatigue, no matter how slight it may be, or add to the necessary toil?

When the nomad families have sown the territory chosen by them, they go away, seeking pastures elsewhere for their herds, leaving but one family to watch the harvests.

We now reached an immense department of 140,000 hectares, called the Enfida, which belongs to the French. The buying of this piece of land, which was sold by the General Khevied-Din, former minister to the Bey, was one of the principal factors in bringing about French rule in Tunisia.

The company that owns this land has had it tilled, has planted vines and trees, established villages, and divided the land in regular sections of ten hectares each, so that the Arabs have every facility to choose and indicate their piece of ground without the danger of any error being possible.

It takes two days to cross this Tunisian province. The workmen employed all over the territory to build a French road in it are an extraordinary lot of men. There is the thick-lipped negro, with big,

white eyes and dazzling teeth, that is digging by the side of the Arab with his delicate profile; the hairy Spaniard, the native of Morocco, the Moor, the Maltese, and also the French laborer toil side by side, stranded here in this country, one knows not why or how; there are also Greeks, Turks, and all the different types from the east, and one wonders how low must be the general average of their honesty, morality, and friendliness.

We were now approaching the sea, whose blue line we could see on the horizon. At the end of a cape a city rose into sight, whose straight, glittering light appeared to run over the water to the setting sun. This was Hommamet, called Put-Put under the Roman rule. In the distance, on the plain before us, rose a circular ruin which, through a mirage-like effect, appeared gigantic. It was another Roman tomb, only thirty feet high, called Kars-el-Menara.

Night was coming rapidly upon us. The horses could only walk. Suddenly through the shadows appeared a white wall; it was the intendant's house at the modern end of the Enfida, the Bordj of Bon-Ficha, a kind of square fortress, protected by an iron gateway and walls without any openings against the attacks of the Arabs. We were expected, and Madame de Moreau, the wife of the intendant, had prepared an excellent dinner for us. We had traveled over eighty kilometers, notwithstanding the state of the bridges and roads.

*December 12th.*

We left at break of day. The sky at dawn was of a deep rose color. How can I ever describe it? I might say it was almost a salmon pink, were it a

little brighter. One glance, the glance of the present day, can perceive the endless scale of shades—it can distinguish the blending of colors, the different degrees, the modifications they undergo under the influence of light and shadow at certain hours of the day. But we only have, to express these thousands of subtle colorings, a few words, the plain words with which our forefathers used to describe the wonderful colors that greeted their primitive eyes.

We drew still nearer to the sea, or, rather, to a pond that opened into the sea. With my field-glass I saw flamingoes in the water, and I left the carriage to creep through the brushwood, in order to get a closer view of them.

This large pond was used formerly as a place of refuge for the ships of natives of Aphrodisium, a band of pirates who found shelter here.

We saw in the distance the ruins of this town, where Belisarius halted on his march to Carthage. A triumphal arch stands there still, also the remains of a temple of Venus and of a large fort.

On the territory of Enfida alone there are traces of seventeen Roman cities. Near the banks of the river is Hergla, which was the wealthy Aurea Cœlia of Antoninus; and if, instead of turning toward Kairwan, we continued our way in a straight line, we should see, after a three days' march, the amphitheater Ed-Djem, standing in an immense uncultivated plain; it was as large as the Coliseum in Rome, and could seat eighty thousand spectators.

In Algeria and in the Algerian Sahara all women dress in white, those of the city as well as those of the tribes. In Tunisia, on the contrary, the city women are draped from head to foot in veils of black India muslin, which gives one the impression



of strange apparitions roaming about in the streets, which are so bright in the little southern towns. And the women of the country are clothed in robes of deep blue, which are full and graceful in effect, giving them an appearance of biblical characters.

We crossed a plain where the handiwork of man may be seen everywhere, for we were nearing the center of the Enfida called Enfidaville, after bearing the name of Dar-el Bey.

In the distance we saw trees! How astonishing! They were quite tall, too, though planted only four years before, which goes to show how astonishingly productive this land is, when it is properly cultivated. The French flag could be seen waving on several of the large buildings. This was the residence of the general manager and the heart of the future city. A village had already sprung up around these principal buildings, and a mart was open every Monday, when extensive business transactions were carried on. The Arabs came in large numbers from distant points.

It is very interesting to make a study of the management of this property, where the interests of the natives have been looked after as carefully as those of the Europeans. It is a model agrarian government for those mixed countries, where customs are entirely different, calling for special foresight in making the laws.

After taking breakfast in this capital of the Enfida, we went to visit a very peculiar and curious village built on a rock, a distance of about five kilometers.

Only now and then could we see a few cactus woodlands, about the size of one of our ordinary orchards.

Here is the origin of these woodlands:

There exists in Tunisia a very interesting custom called the "right to vivify the soil," which allows Arabs to take possession of any uncultivated lands, and make them fruitful, if the proprietor is not there to oppose them. So that an Arab, perceiving a field which looks fertile, plants either olives or more often a species of cactus mistakenly called by him fig trees of Barbary, securing, by doing this, half of every crop as long as the tree lives. The other half belongs to the landowner, who has only to watch henceforth the sale of the fruit and claim his share.

The invading Arab must care for the field, fertilize it, protect it from thieves, and defend it in every way as if it really belonged to him, and each year he puts up his fruit for sale in order that the proceeds may be divided equally. Almost always, however, he manages to become the owner of the trees and pays to the real proprietor a kind of irregular rent in proportion to the value of each crop.

We finally reached the village which we had started out to visit. It was a mass of ruins and of crumbling walls where it was hard to distinguish the inhabited hovels from those which were deserted and no longer in use. The walls still standing to the north and the west were so much undermined and so threatening that we dared not venture among them: a shove would make them crumble down.

We return at night to sleep at Enfidaville.

*December 13th.*

First, we crossed the vineyards planted by the Franco-African Society, and then we reached limitless plains where wandered, from side to side, that

extraordinary combination consisting of a camel, a plow, and an Arab. Then the ground became arid, and with the help of a field-glass I beheld a wilderness of enormous stones standing upright in all directions, further than the eye could see. Upon closer inspection we recognized these as dolmens. This was a burial-ground, the proportions of which are beyond all conception, for they covered forty hectares. Each tomb is composed of four flat stones, three of which are standing, the fourth being placed on top, forming a roof. For many years all efforts made by the intendant to discover any kind of vault beneath these megalithic monuments remained useless. But about two years ago M. Hamy, who is in charge of the Museum of Ethnology in Paris, succeeded, after repeated researches, in discovering the entrance to these subterranean tombs, which was hidden with wonderful skill under heavy stones.

On leaving this ancient and immense burial-ground, we perceived a white house. It was El-Menzel, the residence of the manager of the southern part of Enfida, where our journey ended.

*December 14th.*

Next we found ourselves on a limitless moor where grew an intermittent herb, a small grayish-green plant, of which camels are very fond. We could see large herds of dromedaries feeding upon it. When we passed among them they stared at us with their big shining eyes, and gave us the impression of being in the days when the hesitating Creator threw handfuls of various types upon earth, as if to judge of the value of his doubtful creations; the shapeless animals, which He has destroyed since, little by little, allowing, however, a few primitive types

to survive on this neglected continent of Africa, where He has evidently forgotten in the sands the giraffe, the ostrich, and the dromedary.

When Sidi-Okba arrived with his riders in this sinister desert city, he struck camp in this solitude. His companions, surprised at seeing him choose this spot, advised him to go farther, but he answered:

"We must remain here, and even found a city here, for such is God's will."

They objected that there was no water to drink and neither stones nor wood with which to build.

But he silenced them with these words: "God will provide."

The next day it was announced that water had been found. The next day following this some of the Arabs who had been sent to reconnoiter announced to Sidi-Okba that they had seen forests on the slope of the neighboring mountains.

Kairwan, notwithstanding this miracle, is built entirely of bricks.

But now the plain became a marsh of yellow mud, where the horses slipped; they pulled at the carriage without making the slightest advance, and fell exhausted, sinking in the mire up to their knees, the wheels buried to the hub. The sky became clouded, and a very fine rain began to fall. Suddenly the carriage stopped, and one of the back wheels had broken down.

We had to get out and walk. We were then exposed to the rain, and the wind was beating down upon us, and we raised with each step enormous lumps of clay that stuck to our shoes, weighing us down until we were well-nigh exhausted.

After tramping in this exhausting manner for a kilometer or more, we saw through the fog, quite

a distance ahead of us, a slender, tapering tower, which was scarcely visible and whose summit was lost in a cloud, being almost of the same colorless tint. It was a vague and startling apparition, which, as we gradually approached it, took on the form of a minaret, the only thing that could be distinguished in this misty weather.

Then to the right appeared a monument covered with domes: it was the mosque known as the mosque of the "Barbier," and at last the city could be distinguished, though it was still an indistinct and hazy mass behind the curtain of rain.

Oh, this melancholy city lost in this desert, in this dry and desolate land! The Arabs sheltered in the sellers' shops watched as we went by through the narrow and winding streets, and when we came across a woman, she looked like a spook dressed in black or death itself, as she meandered between these walls yellowed by the rain.

We dined that night at the house of the French consul and civil comptroller, where we found a warm and charming reception, which recompensed us for our previous hardships.

*December 15th.*

Daylight had not yet appeared when one of my companions awoke me. The streets were already filled, for Orientals rise before the sun, and we saw between the houses a beautiful, clear sky that gave promises of heat and light.

After a much invigorating Turkish bath we returned to the open air, where we were intoxicated with pleasure, as we perceived in the bright sunlight the streets of Kairwan, the sacred city, which is white like all Arabian towns, but more barbaric,



more sharply characterized, stamped with fanaticism, and more striking in its obvious poverty, its wretched though haughty nobility, than any of the other cities.

The inhabitants had just gone through a period of frightful drought, and its traces were still plainly visible. As in all the market towns of Central Africa, all sorts of things were sold in shops that looked like little boxes and certainly were no larger, and in these could be seen the merchants squatted after the Turkish fashion. There were dates from Gafso or the Sonf, gathered in large bundles of clammy paste, from which the merchant detached fragments with his fingers. And there were also vegetables, pimentos, and dough, and in the "souks," which were long, winding, covered bazaars, could be seen fabrics, rugs, saddlery embroidered in gold and silver, and an incredible number of cobblers making Turkish slippers of yellow leather.

We went toward the mosque Ijama Kebir or Sidi-Okba, whose tall minaret overlooks the city and the desert which cuts it off from the world. It appears suddenly at the turn of the road. It is a large, massive building supported by enormous buttresses, a white mass of great stateliness and inexplicably uncouth beauty. In entering it a magnificent courtyard appeared first, inclosed by a double cloister upheld by two graceful rows of Roman columns. We might have been in the interior of one of the beautiful monasteries of Italy.

The mosque itself is on the right, and receives its light through seventeen double doors, which we had opened before entering.

I only know three other religious structures in the world that have inspired in me the unexpected

and astoundingly startling emotion that I experienced before this surprising barbaric monument: Mont Saint-Michel, Saint Mark's of Venice, and the Chapel Palatine in Palermo.

These are the masterpieces, thoroughly reasoned out and admirably studied, of great architects sure of the ultimate result and effect; they were pious men, no doubt, but men who were artists before everything, inspired by the love of lines, of design, and decorative beauty, as much as, and, perhaps, more than, by the love of God. But here it was another matter. A fanatical wandering tribe, scarcely capable of constructing walls, had come upon this land covered with ruins left by its predecessors, and, gathering everything that seemed beautiful, had raised, in a moment of sublime inspiration, a monument to its God, a building composed of materials torn from the crumbling towns, but a structure as perfect and stately as the purest conceptions of the greatest hewers of stone.

Before us appeared a tremendously huge temple that looked like a sacred forest, for one hundred and eighty columns in onyx, porphyry, and marble supported the arches of seventeen naves corresponding to the seventeen doors.

The eye loses itself for a moment in this deep entanglement of slim, round pillars of an irreproachable grace, whose every shade blended and harmonized, and whose Byzantine capitals of the African and Oriental school are of rare workmanship and infinite variety. Some certainly are perfect, and the most original, perhaps, represents a palm tree twisted by the wind.

As I advanced in this divinely beautiful abode, all the columns seemed to be moving, to be forming

about me varied designs of a delightful, changeable regularity.

In our Gothic cathedrals the effect of grandeur is obtained by means of the intended disproportion between the height and the width. Here, on the contrary, the unique harmony of this temple consists in the proportion and the number of these slender shafts upholding the edifice, filling, peopling, and making it what it is, creating its charm and grandeur. Their colored multitude give an impression of limitless space, while the building not being very high conveys to the mind a feeling of weightiness. It seemed to me as vast as the world, and I felt crushed as under the power of God.

Everywhere we found remarkable details. The room of the Sultan, who entered by a special door, was built from a wooden wall carved as if by great chisellers. The pulpit, also, in panels wonderfully chiseled, produces a very beautiful effect, and the *mihrab*, which indicated the Mecca, was a beautiful niche of sculptured marble, both painted and gilded, of an exquisite decoration and style.

Facing the middle door of the mosque, the ninth to the right, as well as to the left, the minaret stood upright on the other side of the courtyard. It had a hundred and twenty-nine steps, which we climbed.

From that height Kairwan at our feet seemed a checkerboard of plaster terraces, from which sprouted in all directions the large, glittering cupolas of the mosques and *houbbas*. On all sides could be seen a yellow limitless desert, while near the walls appeared here and there the green slabs of the field of cacti. This boundless horizon was infinitely vacuous and dismal, and more penetratingly distressful than the Sahara itself.

Kairwan, they say, was much larger. They can still give the names of the districts that have disappeared.

Isolated and beyond the city limits about a kilometer stands the *zaouia*, or, rather, the mosque, of Sidi-Sahab (the Prophet's barber), that attracts, even from afar, the eye; we went to it.

This *zaouia*, different from that of Djama-Kebir, which we had just left, was in no way imposing, though it appealed to me as the most graceful, the most highly colored and coquettish of mosques, and also as the most perfect example of Arabian decorative art I had ever seen.

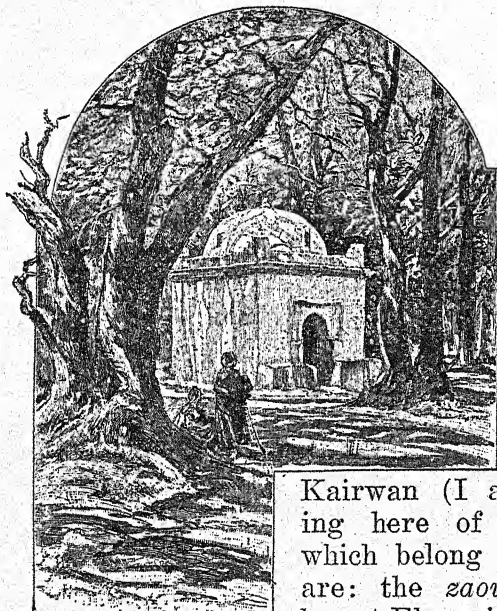
We entered by a staircase of antique tiles of a delightful design into a little entrance hall, paved and ornamented in the same way. A long, narrow courtyard came next, surrounded by a cloister with arches in the shape of a horseshoe, resting on Roman columns and reflecting, when the day is very bright, the dazzling brilliancy of the sun, which pours down in sheets of gold upon all these walls, covered evenly with tiles of wonderful coloring and infinite variety. The large square courtyard into which we drifted next is also entirely decorated. The light shone, glittered, and even gave a dazzling sort of polish to this immense enameled palace, where were lighted up, under the blazing Saharan sky, all the designs and colorings of Oriental pottery. Above these were inexpressibly delightful arabesques. It was upon this fairy-like courtyard that opened the door of the sanctuary containing the tomb of Sidi-Sahab, companion and barber to the Prophet, three hairs of whose beard he carried on his breast to his dying day.

This sanctuary, ornamented with regular designs

in white and black marble, in which inscriptions are traced, which was filled with thick rugs and standards, appeared to me less beautiful than the two never-to-be-forgotten courts by which we reached it.

On leaving it we crossed a third court, peopled with young men. It was a Mussulman college, a school for fanatics.

All these *zaouias*, with which the land of Islam



is covered, are, as it were, the eggs of the innumerable orders and fraternities between which are divided the special devotions of the faithful.

The principal one in

Kairwan (I am not speaking here of the mosques, which belong to God alone) are: the *zaouia* of Si-Mahomet-Elonani; the *zaouia* of

Sidi-Abd-el-Kader-el-Djalani, the greatest and most revered saint of Islam; the *zaouia* Et-Tid-Jani; the *zaouia* Sidi-Mahomet-Ben-Aissa from Mekues, which contains tambourines, *daboukas*, swords, iron heads, and other instruments necessary to the fierce ceremonies of the Aissaouas.

These innumerable orders and brotherhoods of



Islam, which resemble the Catholic orders in many points, and which, placed under the protection of a venerated marabout, are connected with the Prophet by a chain of pious doctors called by the Arabs *Selsesat*, have increased considerably, since the beginning of the present century especially, and they form the most formidable bulwarks of the Mahometan religion against the civilization and domination of the Europeans.

Under the title of *Marabout and Khonan*, Major Rinn has enumerated and analyzed them in the most complete and erudite manner.

*December 16th.*

The road from Kairwan toward Susa increased the feeling of depression felt in the Sacred City.

After the former series of large cemeteries, vast fields of stone, which we had seen on our way to Kairwan, we now saw hills and mounds of all sorts of refuse, which had undoubtedly accumulated there for centuries; then began once more the marshy plain, where we often drove over the backs of tortoises, and again the moor where camels pastured. Behind us the town, the domes, the mosques, and minarets rose in that mournful solitude like a mirage of the desert, then they receded and finally disappeared.

After several hours' walking the first halt was called near a *koubba*, in a clump of olive trees. We were at Sidi-L'Hanni, and I never saw the sun make of a white cupola a more astonishing marvel of colorings. Was it white? Yes, of a blinding white! and yet the light was so strangely and curiously decomposed on this huge egg that we could perceive an enchanting blending of mysterious shades, which

seemed imaginary rather than real, so delicate, so faint, so steeped in that snowy whiteness, that we did not see them immediately; only after the first astonished, dazzled look were they revealed to us. And then we could see nothing else but these shadings, so numerous, so varied and strong, and yet almost invisible. The more you looked at them the more pronounced they became. Shadows of gold fluttered on these outlines, bathed in a dim lilac as if in a mist, which was crossed here and there by bluish rays. The motionless shadow of one of its parts was sometimes gray, or green, or yellow. Under the shelter of the cornice the wall below seemed violet: and I surmised the atmosphere must be mauve around that blinding dome, which looked to me now almost pink, yes, almost pink, for on staring at it too much the tones and shades, so bright and clear, became confused under the brilliancy of the light. And the shadow thrown on the ground, of what shade was it? Who could ever analyze, describe, or paint it? How many years will it take before, by steeping our eyes in these indescribable colorings, so novel to us who have been taught and trained to gaze at the atmosphere of Europe with its effects and reflections, we will be able to understand these, distinguish and express them so that we will be in a position to give to those who see them on canvas, where they will some day be painted by the brush of an artist, the complete rendering of their beauty as it really is?

We then found a country less barren, where olive trees grew. At Mouriddin, near a well, a beautiful girl laughed, showing her teeth, as we passed by, and a little farther on we passed by a rich merchant of Susa, returning to town, riding a donkey and fol-

lowed by a little negro boy carrying his gun. He had no doubt just been inspecting his field of olive trees and his vineyards. He was young, clothed in a green vest and a pink jacket, partly hidden under a silk burnous draped about his shoulders and hips. Seated like a woman on his donkey, which trotted along, he dangled his two legs incased in stockings of the purest white, while on his feet he kept fast two glossy heelless slippers by some mysterious means.

And the little negro boy, dressed in red, with a gun on his shoulder, ran with a wonderful agility behind his master's mount.

Here we were at Susa.

If only to see Susa, this long trip is worth making. What a beautiful wall, reaching as far as the sea, for carriages cannot enter the narrow and winding streets of this town of former times. The wall ran along the shore with its battlements and square towers, then it made a curve, followed the beach, turned once more, ascended and continued in circular manner without once changing, not even for a few meters, the coquettish appearance of its Saracen bulwarks.

After going through the town, an interweaving of astonishing lanes, and as we had still another hour of daylight, we decided to go see at a distance of ten minutes from the gateway the excavations being made by the authorities on the site of the burial-ground in Hadrumentum. Large vaults have been discovered there that contained as many as twenty sepulchers, some of which bear traces of mural paintings. These researches are due to army officers, who become in time enthusiastic archæologists, and who would render invaluable help in this and

other sciences if the Administration of Fine Arts did not discourage them by vexatious ordinances.

In 1860 there came to light in this same necropolis a very curious mosaic representing the labyrinth of Crete with the Minotaur in the middle, and near the entrance a bark bringing Theseus, with Ariadne and her thread. A photograph of this mosaic was kindly offered to me, made from a drawing of Mr. Larmande, draughtsman to the government.

We returned to Susa at sunset to dine at the residence of the French Civil Manager, who is one of the most learned and most interesting raconteurs of the manners and customs of this country. From his house we could see the whole town, a cascade of square, whitewashed roofs, where black cats ran about, and sometimes a phantom rose, dressed in light or colored garments. From place to place a tall palm tree grew between the houses and spread its bouquet of green leaves over this even whiteness.

Then, when the moon had risen, all this became a silver foam rolling toward the sea, a wonderful poet's dream realized; the improbable apparition of a fantastic city from a glowing stream of light ascended to the heavens.

We wandered through the streets until a very late hour. A Moorish café attracted our attention, and we entered. It was full of men lying or seated either on the ground or on the boards, covered with rugs, around an Arabian story teller. He was a fat old man with roguish eyes, who spoke with a comical mimicry that would of itself have amused one without the aid of words. He was telling them a joke, the story of an impostor who tried to pass for a marabout, but whose identity the Iman revealed.

His simple-minded auditors were delighted, and followed with great attention a recital which was interrupted only by loud laughter.

And we stopped in a narrow street in front of a fine Oriental house, whose open door showed a long straight staircase, decorated in tiles and illuminated from top to bottom by an invisible lamp, throwing a shower and a pulverized dust of light, whose source seemed also to be a mystery. Under this inexplicable radiance each enameled step seemed to be awaiting some one, perhaps some fat old Mussulman, though it looked more as if it must be a young lover. Never did I understand the meaning of expectancy, or even dream of it, as I did before this open door and this deserted staircase. Outside, in the wall lighted by the moon, hung a large closed balcony which they call a *barmakli*. There were two darkened openings in the middle, behind the valuable chiseled ironwork of the *moncharabis*. Was she in there, watching, listening, this Arabian Juliet, whose heart beat fast and who heartily hates us? May be. But her sensual desires are not like ours, which, in our country and on a similar night, throw us in quasi-delirium of passion. On this calm and soporific soil, so captivating that the legend of the lotus-eaters was born there in the island of Djerba, the atmosphere is sweeter than anywhere else, the sun warmer, daylight clearer, but the heart does not know true love. The women are beautiful and ardent, and yet are ignorant of our tender caresses. Their simple souls have remained strangers to our sentimental emotions, and their kisses, it is said, do not inspire the dreams of true love.





## MAROCCA



Y friend, you ask me to give you my impressions of Africa, to tell you my adventures, and, especially, my love affairs in this country which has long had such an attraction for me. You were amused in anticipation at my dusky sweethearts, as you called them, and said you could see me returning to France followed by a tall ebony-colored female wearing a yellow silk bandanna round her head and voluminous gaudy trousers.

No doubt the Moorish women will play a part, for I have seen several of them who have made me feel very much inclined to fall in love with them; but by way of a beginning, I came across something better, and very original.

In your last letter to me you say: "When I know how people love in a country I know that country well enough to describe it, although I may never

have seen it." Let me tell you, then, that here they love furiously. From the very first moment one feels a sort of trembling ardor, of constant desire, to the very tips of the fingers, which overexcites our amorous feelings, and all our faculties of physical sensation, from the simple contact of the hands down, and makes us commit so many follies.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not know whether what you call love of the heart, love of the soul, whether sentimental idealism, Platonic love, in a word, can exist on this earth; I doubt it myself. But that other love, sensual love, which has something good, a great deal of good about it, is really terrible in this climate. The heat, the burning atmosphere which makes you feverish, those suffocating blasts of wind from the south, those waves of fire which come from the desert which is so near us, that oppressive sirocco, which is more destructive and withering than fire, that perpetual conflagration of an entire continent, that is burned even to its stones by a fierce and devouring sun, these all inflame the blood, excite the flesh, and make brutes of us.

But to come to my story. I shall not tell you about the beginning of my stay in Africa. After going to Bona, Constantine, Biskara, and Setif, I went to Bougie through the defiles of Chabet, by an excellent road through a large forest, which follows the sea at a height of six hundred feet above it, as far as that wonderful bay of Bougie, which is as beautiful as that of Naples, of Ajaccio, or of Douarnenez, which are the most lovely that I know.

Far away in the distance, before one enters the large inlet where the water is perfectly calm, one sees Bougie. It is built on the steep sides of a high

hill, covered with trees, and forms a white spot on that green slope; it might almost be taken for the foam of a cascade, falling into the sea.

I had no sooner set foot in that delightful small town than I knew that I should stay there a long time. In all directions the eye rests on rugged, strangely shaped hill-tops, which are so close together that one can hardly see the open sea, so that the gulf looks like a lake. The blue water is wonderfully transparent, and the azure sky—a deep azure, as if it had received two coats of paint—expands its wonderful beauty about it. They seem to be a reflection of each other, as in a mirror.

Bougie is a town of ruins, and on the quay, as one approaches, one sees such a magnificent ruin that it reminds one of a scene at the opera. It is the old Saracen Gate, overgrown with ivy, and there are ruins in all directions on the hills round the town, fragments of Roman walls, bits of Saracen monuments, the remains of Arab buildings.

I had taken a small Moorish house in the upper town. You know those dwellings which have been described so often. They have no windows in the outer wall; but they are lighted from top to bottom by an inner court. On the first floor there is a large, cool room, in which one passes the day, and a terrace on the roof, on which one spends the night.

I at once fell in with the custom of all hot countries, that is to say, of taking a siesta after lunch. That is the hottest time in Africa, the time when one can scarcely breathe; when the streets, the fields, and the long, dazzling, white roads are deserted, when every one is asleep, or, at any rate, trying to sleep, attired as scantily as possible.

In my drawing-room, which had columns of Arab

architecture, I had placed a large, soft couch, covered with a carpet from Djebel-amour, and lay down, very nearly in the costume of Assan, but I could not sleep. There are two forms of torture on this earth which I hope you will never know, the thirst for water and the longing for a woman's society, and I do not know which is the worst. In the desert men would commit any infamy for the sake of a glass of clean, cold water, and what would one not give in some of the towns of the littoral to see a handsome, healthy girl? There is no lack of girls in Africa; on the contrary, they abound, but to continue my comparison, they are as unwholesome as the muddy water in the wells of Sahara.

Well, one day when I was feeling more enervated than usual, I was trying in vain to close my eyes. My legs twitched as if they were being pricked, and I tossed about uneasily on my couch, until at last, unable to bear it any longer, I got up and went out. It was a terribly hot day, in the middle of July, and the pavement was hot enough to bake bread on. My shirt, which was soaked with perspiration, clung to my body, and on the horizon there was a slight, white vapor, which seemed to be palpable heat.

I went down to the beach and walked along the shore of the pretty bay where the baths are. There was nobody about, and nothing was stirring; not a sound of bird or of beast was to be heard, the very waves were silent, and the sea appeared to be asleep in the sun.

Suddenly, behind one of the rocks which were half covered by the silent water, I heard a slight movement, and on turning round, I saw a nude girl in the water, which covered her to the breast, taking a bath; no doubt she reckoned on being alone, at

that hot period of the day. Her face was turned toward the sea, and she was moving gently up and down without perceiving me.

Nothing could have surprised me more than the sight of that beautiful woman in the water, which was as clear as crystal, under a blaze of sunlight. She was marvelously beautiful, tall, and modeled like a statue. She turned round, uttered a cry, and half swimming, half walking, went and hid completely behind her rock; but as she must necessarily come out, I sat down on the beach and waited. Presently she just showed her head, which was covered with thick black braids. She had a rather large mouth, with full lips, large, bold eyes, and her skin, which was somewhat tanned by the climate, looked like a piece of old, hard, polished ivory.

She called out to me: "Go away!" and her full voice, which corresponded to her strong build, had a guttural accent. As I did not move, she added: "It is not right of you to stay there, Monsieur." I did not move, however, and her head disappeared. Ten minutes passed, and then, first her hair, then her forehead, and then her eyes reappeared; but slowly and cautiously, as if she were playing at hide-and-seek and were looking to see who was near. This time she was furious, and called out: "You will cause me to get some illness, for I shall not come out as long as you are there." Thereupon, I got up and walked away, but not without looking round several times. When she thought I was far enough off, she came out of the water, bending down and turning her back to me, and disappeared in a cavity in the rock, behind a skirt that was hanging up in front of it.

I went back the next day. She was bathing again,



but had on a bathing costume, and she began to laugh, and showed her white teeth. A week later we were friends, and in another week we were ardent friends. Her name as Marroca, and she pronounced it as if there were a dozen *r*'s in it. She was the daughter of Spanish colonists, and had married a Frenchman, whose name was Pontabèze. He was in government employ, though I never exactly knew what his position was. I found out that he was always very busy, and I did not care for anything else.

She then changed the time for taking her bath, and came to my house every day to have a siesta there. What a siesta! It could scarcely be called reposing! She was a splendid girl, of a somewhat animal, but superb type. Her eyes were always glowing with passion; her half-opened mouth, her sharp teeth, and even her smiles, had something ferociously loving about them; and her whole body had something of the animal and made her a sort of inferior and magnificent being, a creature who was destined for passionate love, and reminded me of those ancient deities who gave expression of their tenderness on the grass and under the trees.

And then her mind was as simple as two and two are four, and a sonorous laugh served her instead of thought.

Instinctively proud of her beauty, she did not hesitate to display it with daring and unconscious immodesty.

Sometimes she came in the evening, when her husband was on duty somewhere, and we would lie on the terrace. When the full moon lit up the town and the gulf, with its surrounding frame of hills, we saw lying on all the other terraces what looked

like an army of silent phantoms, who would occasionally get up, change their places, and lie down again, in the languorous warmth of the starry sky.

One night, when I was sleeping under the starry sky, she came and knelt down on my carpet, and putting her lips, which curled slightly, close to my face, she said: "You must come and stay at my house." I did not understand her, and asked: "What do you mean?" "Yes, when my husband has gone away, you must come and be with me."

I could not help laughing, and said: "Why, if you come here?" And she went on, almost talking into my mouth, "I want it as a remembrance." Still I did not grasp her meaning. She put her arms round my neck. "When you are no longer here I shall think of it."

I was touched and amused at the same time, and said: "You must be mad. I would much rather remain here. Is your husband very unkind to you?" I continued.

She looked vexed, and said: "Oh, no! He is very kind." "But you are not fond of him?" She looked at me with astonishment in her large eyes. "Indeed, I am very fond of him, very; but not so fond as I am of you."

I could not understand it at all, and while I was trying to get at her meaning, she pressed one of those kisses, whose power she knew so well, on my lips, and whispered: "But you will come, will you not?" I resisted, however, and so she got up immediately, and went away; nor did she come back for a week. On the eighth day she came back, stopped gravely at the door of my room, and said: "Are you coming to my house to-night? . . . If you refuse, I shall go away." Eight days is a very

long time, my friend, and in Africa those eight days are as good as a month. "Yes," I said, and opened my arms, and she threw herself into them.

At night she waited for me in neighboring street, and took me to their house, which was very small, and near the harbor. I first of all went through the kitchen, where they had their meals, and then into a very tidy, whitewashed room, with photographs on walls and paper flowers under a glass case. Marroca seemed beside herself with pleasure, and she jumped about, and said: "There, you are at home, now." And I certainly acted as though I had been, though I felt rather embarrassed and somewhat uneasy.

Suddenly a loud knocking at the door made us start, and a man's voice called out: "Marroca, it is I." She started: "My husband! . . . Here, hide under the bed quickly." I looked distractedly for my overcoat, but she gave me a push, and gasped out: "Come along, come along."

I lay down flat on my stomach, and crept under the bed without a word, while she went into the kitchen. I heard her open a cupboard, and then shut it again, and she came back into the room, carrying some object which I could not see, but which she quickly put down; and as her husband was getting impatient, she said, calmly: "I cannot find the matches." Then suddenly she added: "Oh! Here they are; I will come and let you in."

The man came in, and I could see nothing of him but his feet, which were enormous. If the rest of him was in proportion, he must have been a giant.

I heard kisses, a little pat on her bare neck, and a laugh, and he said, in strong Marseilles accent: "I forgot my purse, so I was obliged to come back;

you were sound asleep, I suppose." He went to the cupboard, and was a long time in finding what he wanted; and as Marrocca had thrown herself on the bed as if she were tired out, he went up to her, and no doubt tried to caress her, for she flung a volley of angry *r's* at him. His feet were so close to me that I felt a stupid, inexplicable longing to catch hold of them, but I restrained myself, and when he saw that he could not succeed in his wish, he got angry, and said: "You are not at all kind to-night. Good-by." I heard another kiss, then the big feet turned, and I saw the nails in the soles of his shoes as he went into the next room, the front door was shut, and I was saved!

I came slowly out of my retreat, feeling rather humiliated, and whilst Marrocca danced a jig round me, shouting with laughter and clapping her hands, I threw myself heavily into a chair. But I jumped up with a bound, for I had sat down on something cold, and I was not fully dressed, the contact made me start, and I looked around. I had sat down on a small axe, used for cutting wood, and as sharp as a knife. How had it got there? I had certainly not seen it when I went in; but Marrocca, seeing me jump up, nearly choked with laughter, and coughed with both hands to her sides.

I thought her amusement rather out of place; we had risked our lives stupidly, and I still felt a cold shiver down my back, and I was rather hurt at her foolish laughter. "Suppose your husband had seen me?" I said. "There was no danger of that," she replied. "What do you mean? . . . No danger? . . . That is a good joke! . . . If he had stooped down, he must have seen me."

She did not laugh any more, she only looked at

me with her large eyes, which were bright with merriment. "He would not have stooped." "Why?" I persisted. "Just suppose that he had let his hat fall, he would have been sure to pick it up, and then . . . I was well prepared to defend my position, in this costume!" She put her two strong, round arms about my neck, and, lowering her voice, as she did when she said: "I *ador-r-e* you," she whispered. "Then he would *never* have got up again." I did not understand her, and said: "What do you mean?"

She gave me a cunning wink, and put out her hand to the chair on which I had sat down, and her outstretched hands, her smile, her half-open lips, her white, sharp, and ferocious teeth, all drew my attention to the little axe which was used for cutting wood, whose sharp blade was glistening in the candle-light, and while she put out her hand as if she were going to take it, she put her left arm around me, and drawing me to her, and putting her lips against mine, with her right arm she made a motion as if she were cutting off the head of a kneeling man!

This, my friend, is the manner in which people here understand conjugal duties, love, and hospitality!





## THE QUESTION OF LATIN



HIS subject of Latin that has been dinned into our ears for some time past recalls to my mind a story—a story of my youth.

I was finishing my studies with a teacher, in a big central town, at the Institution Robineau, celebrated through the entire province for the special attention paid there to the study of Latin.

For the past ten years, the Robineau Institute beat the imperial *lycée* of the town at every competitive examination, and all the colleges of the sub-prefecture, and these constant successes were due, they said, to an usher, a simple usher, M. Piquedent, or rather Père Piquedent.

He was one of those middle-aged men quite gray, whose real age it is impossible to tell, and whose history we can guess at first glance. Having entered as an usher at twenty into the first institution

that presented itself so that he could proceed to take first his degree of Master of Arts, and afterward the degree of Doctor of Laws, he found himself so enmeshed in this routine that he remained an usher all his life. But his love for Latin did not leave him and harassed him like an unhealthy passion. He continued to read the poets, the prose writers, the historians, to interpret them and penetrate their meaning, to comment on them with a perseverance bordering on madness.

One day, the idea came into his head to oblige all the students in his class to answer him in Latin only; and he persisted in this resolution until at last they were capable of sustaining an entire conversation with him just as they would in their mother tongue. He listened to them, as a leader of an orchestra listens to his musicians rehearsing, and striking his desk every moment with his ruler, he exclaimed :

“ Monsieur Lefrère, Monsieur Lefrère, you are committing a solecism! You forget the rule, you forget the rule.”

“ Monsieur Plantel, your way of expressing yourself is altogether French and in no way Latin. You must understand the genius of a language. Look here, listen to me.”

Now, it came to pass that the pupils of the Institution Robineau carried off, at the end of the year, all the prizes for composition, translation, and Latin conversation.

Next year, the principal, a little man, as cunning as an ape, of whom he had, besides, the grinning and grotesque physique, had printed on his programmes, on his advertisements, and painted on the door of his institution :

"Latin Studies a Specialty. Five first prizes carried off in the five classes of the *lycée*.

"Two honor prizes at the general competitive examinations with all the *lycées* and colleges of France."

For ten years the Institution Robineau triumphed in the same fashion. Now, my father, allured by these successes, sent me as a day pupil to Robineau's—or, as we called it, Robinetto or Robinettino—and made me take special private lessons from Père Piquedent at the rate of five francs per hour, out of which the usher got two francs and the principal three francs. I was then eighteen, and was in the philosophy class.

These private lessons were given in a little room looking out on the street. It so happened that Père Piquedent, instead of talking Latin to me, as he did when teaching publicly in the institution, kept telling me his troubles in French. Without relations, without friends, the poor man conceived an attachment for me, and poured out his misery to me.

He had never for the last ten or fifteen years chatted confidentially with any one.

"I am like an oak in a desert," he said—" *sicut quercus in solitudine*."

The other ushers disgusted him. He knew nobody in the town since he had no time to devote to making acquaintances.

"Not even the nights, my friend, and that is the hardest thing on me. The dream of my life is to have a room with my own furniture, my own books, little things that belong to myself and which others could not touch. And I have nothing of my own, nothing except my trousers and my frock-coat, nothing, not even my mattress and my pillow! I

have not four walls to shut myself up in except when I come to give a lesson in this room. Do you see what this means—a man forced to spend his life without ever having the right, without ever finding the time to shut himself up all alone, no matter where, to think, to reflect, to work, to dream? Ah! my dear boy, a key, the key of a door which one can lock—this is happiness, mark you, the only happiness!

“Here, all day long, teaching all those restless rogues, and during the night the dormitory with the same restless rogues snoring. And I have to sleep in the public bed at the end of two rows of beds occupied by these youngsters whom I must look after. I can never be alone, never! If I go out I find the streets full of people, and, when I am tired of walking, I go into some café crowded with smokers and billiard players. I tell you what, it is the life of a galley slave.”

I said :

“Why did you not take up some other line, Monsieur Piquedent?”

He exclaimed :

“What, my little friend? I am not a shoemaker, or a joiner, or a hatter, or a baker, or a hairdresser. I only know Latin, and I have no diploma which would enable me to sell my knowledge at a high price. If I were a doctor I would sell for a hundred francs what I now sell for a hundred sous; and I would supply it probably of an inferior quality, for my title would be enough to sustain my reputation.”

Sometimes he would say to me :

“I have no rest in life except in the hours spent with you. Don't be afraid! you'll lose nothing by

that. I'll make it up to you in the class-room by making you speak twice as much Latin as the others."

One day, I grew bolder, and offered him a cigarette. He stared at me with astonishment at first, then he gave a glance toward the door:

"If any one were to come in, my dear boy . . . ?"

"Well, let us smoke at the window," said I.

And we went and leaned our elbows on the window-sill looking on the street, holding concealed in our hands the little rolls of tobacco. Just opposite to us was a laundry. Four women in loose white waists were passing hot, heavy irons over the linen spread out before them, from which a warm steam arose.

Suddenly, another, a fifth, carrying on her arm a large basket which made her stoop, came out to take the customers their shirts, their handkerchiefs, and their sheets. She stopped on the threshold as if she were already fatigued; then, she raised her eyes, smiled as she saw us smoking, flung at us, with her left hand, which was free, the sly kiss characteristic of a free-and-easy workingwoman, and went away at a slow pace, dragging her feet as she went.

She was a woman of about twenty, small, rather thin, pale, rather pretty, with a roguish air and laughing eyes beneath her ill-combed fair hair.

Père Piquedent, affected, began murmuring:

"What an occupation for a woman! Really a trade only fit for a horse."

And he spoke with emotion about the misery of the people. He had a heart which swelled with lofty democratic sentiment, and he referred to the fatiguing pursuits of the working class with phrases



borrowed from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and with sobs in his throat.

Next day, as we were resting our elbows at the same window, the same woman perceived us, and cried out to us :

“ Good-day, scholars! ” in a comical sort of tone, while she made a contemptuous gesture with her hands.

I flung her a cigarette, which she immediately began to smoke. And the four other ironers rushed out to the door with outstretched hands to get cigarettes also.

And each day a friendly intercourse was established between the workingwomen of the pavement and the idlers of the boarding school.

Père Piquedent was really a comic sight to look at. He trembled at being noticed, for he might lose his position; and he made timid and ridiculous gestures, quite a theatrical display of love signals, to which the women responded with a regular fusillade of kisses.

A perfidious idea came into my mind. One day, on entering our room, I said to the old usher in a low tone:

“ You would not believe it, Monsieur Piquedent, I met the little washerwoman! You know the one I mean, the woman who had the basket, and I spoke to her! ”

He asked, rather worried at my manner:

“ What did she say to you? ”

“ She said to me . . . Why, she said she thought you were very nice. The fact of the matter is, I believe—I believe, that she is a little in love with you . . . ” I saw that he was growing pale. He continued:

"She is laughing at me, of course. These things don't happen at my age."

I said gravely:

"How is that? You are very nice."

As I felt that my trick had produced its effect on him, I did not press the matter.

But every day I pretended that I had met the little laundress and that I had spoken to her about him, so that in the end he believed me, and sent her ardent and earnest kisses.

Now, it happened that one morning, on my way to the boarding school, I really came across her. I accosted her without hesitation, as if I had known her for the last ten years.

"Good - day, Mademoiselle. Are you quite well?"

"Very well, Monsieur, thank you."

"Will you

have a cigarette?"

"Oh! not in the street."

"You can smoke it at home."

"In that case, I will."



"Let me tell you, Mademoiselle, there's something you don't know."

"What is that, Monsieur?"

"The old gentleman—my old professor, I mean——"

"Père Piquedent."

"Yes, Père Piquedent. So you know his name?"

"Faith, I do! What of that?"

"Well, he is in love with you!"

She burst out laughing wildly, and exclaimed:

"You are only fooling."

"Oh! no, I am not fooling! He keeps talking of you all through the lesson. I bet that he'll marry you!"

She ceased laughing. The idea of marriage makes every girl serious. Then she repeated, with an incredulous air:

"This is humbug!"

"I swear to you, it's true."

She picked up her basket which she had laid down at her feet.

"Well, we'll see," she said. And she went away.

Presently, when I had reached the boarding school, I took Père Piquedent aside, and said:

"You must write to her; she is infatuated with you."

And he wrote a long letter, tenderly affectionate, full of phrases and circumlocutions, metaphors and similes, philosophy and academic gallantry; and I took on myself the responsibility of delivering it to the young woman.

She read it with gravity, with emotion; then she murmured:

“How well he writes! It is easy to see he has got education! Does he really mean to marry me?”

I replied intrepidly: “Faith, he has lost his head about you!”

“Then he must invite me to dinner on Sunday at the Ile des Fleurs.”

I promised that she should be invited.

Père Piquedent was much touched by everything I told him about her.

I added:

“She loves you, Monsieur Piquedent, and I believe her to be a decent girl. It is not right to seduce her and then abandon her.”

He replied in a firm tone:

“I hope I, too, am a decent man, my friend.”

I confess I had at the time no plan. I was playing a practical joke, a schoolboy joke, nothing more. I had been aware of the simplicity of the old usher, his innocence and his weakness. I amused myself without asking myself how it would turn out. I was eighteen, and I had been for a long time looked upon at the *lycée* as a sly practical joker.

So it was agreed that Père Piquedent and I should set out in a hack for the ferry of Queue de Vache, that we should there pick up Angèle, and that I should get them to come into my boat, for in those days I was fond of boating. I would then bring them to the Ile des Fleurs, where the three of us would dine. I had inflicted myself on them, the better to enjoy my triumph, and the usher, consenting to my arrangement, proved clearly that he was losing his head by thus risking the loss of his position.

When we arrived at the ferry, where my boat had been moored since morning, I saw in the grass,

or rather above the tall weeds of the bank, an enormous red parasol, resembling a monstrous wild poppy. Beneath the parasol was the little laundress in her Sunday clothes. I was surprised. She was really pretty, though pale, and graceful, though with a rather suburban grace.

Père Piquedent raised his hat and bowed. She put out her hand toward him, and they stared at one another without uttering a word. Then they stepped into my boat, and I took the oars. They were seated side by side near the stern.

The usher was the first to speak.

"This is nice weather for a row in a boat."

She murmured:

"Oh! yes."

She dipped her hand into the water, skimming the surface, making a thin, transparent film like a sheet of glass, which made a soft plashing along the side of the boat.

When they were in the restaurant, she took it on herself to speak, and ordered dinner, fried fish, a chicken, and salad; then she led us on toward the isle, which she knew perfectly.

After this, she was gay, romping, and even rather tantalizing.

Until dessert, no question of love arose. I had treated them to champagne, and Père Piquedent was tipsy. Herself slightly the worse, she called out:

"Monsieur Piquenez."

He said abruptly:

"Mademoiselle, Monsieur Raoul has communicated my sentiments to you."

She became as serious as a judge.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"What is your reply?"



"We never reply to these questions!"

He puffed with emotion, and went on:

"Well, will the day ever come that you will like me?"

She smiled.

"You big stupid! You are very nice."

"In short, Mademoiselle, do you think that, later on, we might——"

She hesitated a second; then in a trembling voice she said:

"Do you mean to marry me when you say that? For on no other condition, you know."

"Yes, Mademoiselle!"

"Well, that's all right, Monsieur Piquedent!"

It was thus that these two silly creatures promised marriage to each other through the trick of a young scamp. But I did not believe that it was serious, nor, indeed, did they, perhaps.

"You know, I have nothing, not four sous."

He stammered, for he was as drunk as Silenus.

"I have saved five thousand francs."

She exclaimed triumphantly:

"Then we can set up in business?"

He became restless.

"In what business?"

"What do I know? We shall see. With five thousand francs we could do many things. You don't want me to go and live in your boarding school, do you?"

He had not looked forward so far as this, and he stammered in great perplexity:

"What business could we set up in? That would not be suitable, for all I know is Latin!"

She reflected in her turn, passing in review all her business ambitions.

"You could not be a doctor?"

"No, I have no diploma."

"Or a chemist?"

"No more than the other."

She uttered a cry of joy. She had discovered it.

"Then we'll buy a grocer's shop! Oh! what luck! we'll buy a grocer's shop. Not on a big scale, of course; with five thousand francs one does not go far."

He was shocked at the suggestion.

"No, I can't be a grocer. I am—I am—too well known. I only know Latin, that is all I know."

But she poured a glass of champagne down his throat. He drank it and was silent.

We got back into the boat. The night was dark, very dark. I saw clearly, however, that he had caught her by the waist, and that they were hugging each other again and again.

It was a frightful catastrophe. Our escapade was discovered, with the result that Père Piquedent was dismissed. And my father, in a fit of anger, sent me to finish my course of philosophy at Ribaudet's school.

Six months later I took my degree of Bachelor of Arts. Then I went to study law in Paris, and did not return to my native town till ten years after.

At the corner of the Rue de Serpent a shop caught my eye. Over the door were the words: "Colonial Products—Piquedent"; then underneath, so as to enlighten the most ignorant: "Grocery."

I exclaimed:

"*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*"

Piquedent raised his head, left his female cus-

tomer, and rushed toward me with outstretched hands:

“ Ah! my young friend, my young friend, here you are! What luck! what luck! ”

A beautiful woman, very plump, abruptly left the cashier's desk and flung herself on my breast. I had some difficulty in recognizing her, she had grown so stout.

I asked:

“ So, then, you're doing well? ”

Piquedent had gone back to weigh the groceries.

“ Oh! very well, very well, very well. I have made three thousand francs clear this year! ”

“ And what about Latin, Monsieur Piquedent? ”

“ Oh, good heavens! Latin, Latin, Latin—you see it does not keep the pot boiling! ”



## IN THE WOOD



AS the Mayor was about to sit down to breakfast, word was brought to him that the rural policeman, with two prisoners, was awaiting him at the Hotel de Ville. He went there at once and found old Hochedur standing guard before a middle-class couple whom he was regarding with a severe expression on his face, according to his custom when he had to deal with prisoners.

The man, a fat old fellow with a red nose and white hair, seemed utterly dejected; while the woman, a little roundabout individual with shining cheeks, looked at the official who had arrested them, with defiant eyes.

“What is it? What is it, Hochedur?”

The rural policeman made his deposition: He had gone out that morning at his usual time, in order to patrol his beat from the forest of Champieux as far as the boundaries of Argenteuil. He

had not noticed anything unusual in the country except that it was a fine day, and that the wheat was doing well, when the son of old Bredel, who was going over his vines, called out to him: "Here, Daddy Hochedur, go and have a look at the outskirts of the wood. In the first thicket you will find a pair of pigeons who must be a hundred and thirty years old between them!"

He went in the direction indicated, entered the thicket, and there he heard words which made him suspect a flagrant breach of morality. Advancing, therefore, on his hands and knees as if to surprise a poacher, he had arrested the couple whom he found there.

The Mayor looked at the culprits in astonishment, for the man was certainly sixty, and the woman fifty-five at least, and he began to question them, beginning with the man, who replied in such a weak voice that he could scarcely be heard.

"What is your name?"

"Nicholas Beaurain."

"Your occupation?"

"Haberdasher, in the Rue des Martyrs, in Paris."

"What were you doing in the wood?"

The haberdasher remained silent, with his eyes on his fat paunch, and his hands hanging at his sides, and the Mayor continued:

"Do you deny what the officer of the municipal authorities states?"

"No, Monsieur."

"So you confess it?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"What have you to say in your defence?"

"Nothing, Monsieur."



"Where did you meet the partner in your misdemeanor?"

"She is my wife, Monsieur."

"Your wife?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Then . . . then . . . you do not live together . . . in Paris?"

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but we are living together!"

"But in that case . . . you must be mad, altogether mad, my dear sir, to get caught playing lovers in the country at ten o'clock in the morning."

The haberdasher seemed ready to cry with shame, and he murmured: "It was she who enticed me! I told her it was very stupid, but when a woman has got a thing into her head . . . you know . . . you cannot get it out of it."

The Mayor, who liked open speaking, smiled and replied: "In your case, the contrary ought to have happened. You would not be here, if she had had the idea only in her head."

Then Monsieur Beaurain was seized with rage, and turning to his wife, he said: "Do you see to what you have brought us with your poetry? And now we shall have to go before the courts at our age, for a breach of morals! And we shall have to shut up the shop, sell our good will, and go to some other neighborhood! That's what it has come to."

Madame Beaurain got up, and without looking at her husband, she explained herself without embarrassment, without useless modesty, and almost without hesitation.

"Of course, Monsieur, I know that we have made ourselves ridiculous. Will you allow me to

plead my cause like an advocate, or rather like a poor woman? And I hope that you will be kind enough to send us home, and to spare us the disgrace of a prosecution.

“Years ago, when I was young, I made Monsieur Beaurain’s acquaintance on Sunday in this neighborhood. He was employed in a draper’s shop, and I was a saleswoman in a ready-made clothing establishment. I remember it as if it were yesterday. I used to come and spend Sundays here occasionally with a friend of mine, Rose Levèque, with whom I lived in the Rue Pigalle, and Rose had a sweetheart, while I had none. He used to bring us here, and one Saturday he told me laughing that he should bring a friend with him the next day. I quite understood what he meant, but I replied that it would be no good; for I was virtuous, Monsieur.

“The next day we met Monsieur Beaurain at the railway station, and in those days he was good-looking, but I had made up my mind not to encourage him, and I did not. Well, we arrived at Bezons. It was a lovely day, the sort of day that tickles your heart. When it is fine even now, just as it used to be formerly, I grow quite foolish, and when I am in the country I utterly lose my head. The verdure, the swallows flying so swiftly, the smell of the grass, the scarlet poppies, the daisies, all that makes me quite excited! It is like champagne when one is not accustomed to it!

“Well, it was lovely weather, warm and bright, and it seemed to penetrate your body through your eyes when you looked, and through your mouth when you breathed. Rose and Simon hugged and kissed each other every minute, and that gave me something to look at! Monsieur Beaurain and I

walked behind them, without speaking much, for when people do not know each other, they do not find anything to talk about. He looked timid, and I liked to see his embarrassment. At last we got to the little wood; it was as cool as in a bath there, and we four sat down. Rose and her lover teased me because I looked rather stern, but you will understand that I could not be otherwise. And then they began to kiss and hug again, without putting any more restraint upon themselves than if we had not been there; and then they whispered together, and got up and went off among the trees, without saying a word. You may fancy what I looked like, alone with this young fellow whom I saw for the first time. I felt so confused at seeing them go that it gave me courage, and I began to talk. I asked him what his business was, and he said he was a linen-draper's assistant, as I told you just now. We talked for a few minutes, and that made him bold, and he wanted to take liberties with me, but I told him sharply to keep his place. Is not that true, Monsieur Beaurain? "

Monsieur Beaurain, who was looking at his feet in confusion, did not reply, and she continued: "Then he saw that I was virtuous, and he began to make love to me nicely, like an honorable man, and from that time he came every Sunday, for he was very much in love with me. I was very fond of him also, very fond of him! He was a good-looking fellow, formerly; and in short he married me the next September, and we started in business in the Rue des Martyrs.

"It was a hard struggle for some years, Monsieur. Business did not prosper, and we could not afford many country excursions, and, besides, we

had got out of the way of them. One has other things in one's head, and thinks more of the cash box than of pretty speeches, when one is in business. We were growing old by degrees without perceiving it, like quiet people who do not think much about love. One does not regret anything as long as one does not notice what one has lost.

“ And then, Monsieur, business became better, and we were tranquil as to the future! Then, you see, I do not exactly know what passed within me, no, I really do not know, but I began to dream like a little boarding-school girl. The sight of the little carts full of flowers which are drawn about the streets made me cry; the smell of violets sought me out in my easy-chair, behind my cash box, and made my heart beat! Then I would get up and go out on the doorstep to look at the blue sky between the roofs. When one looks at the sky from a street, it seems like a river which descends on Paris, winding as it flows, and the swallows pass to and fro in it like fish. These ideas are very stupid at my age! But what can one do, Monsieur, when one has worked all one's life? A moment comes in which one perceives that one could have done something else, and then one regrets, oh! yes, one feels great regret! Just think that for twenty years I might have gone and had kisses in the woods, like other women. I used to think how delightful it would be to lie under the trees and be in love with some one! And I thought of it every day and every night! I dreamed of the moonlight on the water, until I felt inclined to drown myself.

“ I did not venture to speak to Monsieur Beau-rain about this at first. I knew that he would make fun of me, and send me back to sell my needles and

cotton! And then, to speak the truth, Monsieur Beaurain never said much to me, but when I looked in the glass, I also understood quite well that I no longer appealed to any one!

"Well, I made up my mind, and I proposed to him an excursion into the country, to the place where we had first become acquainted. He agreed without mistrusting anything, and we arrived here this morning, about nine o'clock.

"I felt quite young again when I got among the wheat, for a woman's heart never grows old! And really, I no longer saw my husband as he is at present, but just as he was formerly! That I will swear to you, Monsieur. As true as I am standing here I was intoxicated. I began to kiss him, and he was more surprised than if I had tried to murder him. He kept saying to me: 'Why, you must be mad! You are mad this morning! What is the matter with you? . . .' I did not listen to him, I only listened to my own heart, and I made him come into the wood with me. . . . There it is. . . . I have spoken the truth, Monsieur le Maire, the whole truth."

The Mayor was a sensible man. He rose from his chair, smiled, and said: "Go in peace, Madame, and when you again visit our forests, be more discreet."





## IN THE SPRING



WITH the first day of spring, when the awakening earth puts on its garment of green, and the warm, fragrant air fans our faces and fills our lungs and appears even to penetrate to our hearts, we experience a vague, undefined longing for freedom, for happiness, a desire to run, to wander aimlessly, to breathe in the spring. The previous winter having been unusually severe, this spring feeling was like a form of intoxication in May, as if there were an overabundant supply of sap.

One morning on waking I saw from my window the blue sky glowing in the sun above the neighboring houses. The canaries hanging in the windows were singing loudly, and so were the servants on every floor; a cheerful noise rose up from the streets, and I went out, my spirits as bright as the day, to go—I did not exactly know where. Everybody I met

seemed to be smiling; an air of happiness appeared to pervade everything, in the warm light of returning spring. One might almost have said that a breeze of love was blowing through the city, and the sight of the young women whom I saw in the streets in their morning toilets, in the depths of whose eyes there lurked a hidden tenderness, and who walked with languid grace, filled my heart with agitation.

Without knowing how or why, I found myself on the banks of the Seine. Steamboats were starting for Suresnes, and suddenly I was seized by an unconquerable desire to take a walk through the woods. The deck of the *mouche* was crowded with passengers, for the sun in early spring draws one out of the house, in spite of themselves, and everybody moves about, goes and comes, and talks to his neighbor.

I had a girl neighbor; a little work-girl, no doubt, who possessed the true Parisian charm; a little head, with light curly hair, which looked like a shimmer of light as it danced in the wind, came down to her ears, and descended to the nape of her neck, where it became such fine, light-colored down that one could scarcely see it, but felt an irresistible desire to shower kisses on it.

Under the magnetism of my gaze, she turned her head toward me, and then immediately looked down, while a slight crease at the side of her mouth showed, that was ready to break out into a smile, and also showed a fine, silky, pale down which the sun was gilding a little.

The calm river grew wider; the atmosphere was warm and perfectly still, but a murmur of life seemed to fill all space.

My neighbor raised her eyes again, and this time, as I was still looking at her, she smiled decidedly. She was charming, and in her passing glance I saw a thousand things, which I had hitherto been ignorant of, for I perceived unknown depths, all the charm of tenderness, all the poetry which we dream of, all the happiness which we are continually in search of. I felt an insane longing to open my arms and to carry her off somewhere, so as to whisper the sweet music of words of love into her ears.

I was just about to address her when somebody touched me on the shoulder, and as I turned round in some surprise, I saw an ordinary-looking man, who was neither young nor old, and who gazed at me sadly:

“I should like to speak to you,” he said.

I made a grimace, which he no doubt saw, for he added:

“It is a matter of importance.”

I got up, therefore, and followed him to the other end of the boat, and then he said:

“Monsieur, when winter comes, with its cold, wet, and snowy weather, your doctor says to you constantly: ‘Keep your feet warm, guard against chills, colds, bronchitis, rheumatism, and pleurisy.’

“Then you are very careful, you wear flannel, a heavy greatcoat, and thick shoes, but all this does not prevent you from passing two months in bed. But when spring returns, with its leaves and flowers, its warm, soft breezes, and its smell of the fields, which cause you vague disquiet and causeless emotion, nobody says to you:

“‘Monsieur, beware of love! It is lying in ambush everywhere; it is watching for you at every corner; all its snares are laid, all its weapons are

sharpened, all its guiles are prepared! Beware of love! Beware of love! It is more dangerous than brandy, bronchitis, or pleurisy! It never forgives, and makes everybody commit irreparable follies.'

"Yes, Monsieur, I say that the French Government ought to put large public notices on the walls, with these words: '*Return of spring. French citizens, beware of love!*' just as they put: '*Beware of paint.*'

"However, as the government will not do this, I must supply its place, and I say to you: 'Beware of love!' for it is just going to seize you, and it is my duty to inform you of it, just as in Russia they inform any one that his nose is frozen."

I was much astonished at this individual, and assuming a dignified manner, I said:

"Really, Monsieur, you appear to me to be interfering in a matter which is no concern of yours."

He made an abrupt movement, and replied:

"Ah! Monsieur! Monsieur! If I see that a man is in danger of being drowned at a dangerous spot, ought I to let him perish? So just listen to my story, and you will see why I ventured to speak to you like this.

"It was about this time last year that it occurred. But, first of all, I must tell you that I am a clerk in the Admiralty, where our chiefs, the commissioners, take their gold lace as quill-driving officials seriously, and treat us like fore-castle men on board a ship. Well, from my office I could see a small bit of blue sky and the swallows, and I felt inclined to dance among my portfolios.

"My yearning for freedom grew so intense that, in spite of my repugnance, I went to see my chief,

a short, bad-tempered man, who was always in a rage. When I told him that I was not well, he looked at me, and said: 'I do not believe it, Monsieur, but be off with you! Do you think that any office can go on with clerks like you?' I started at once, and went down the Seine. It was a day like this, and I took the *mouche*, to go as far as Saint-Cloud. Ah! What a good thing it would have been if my chief had refused me permission to leave the office for the day!

"I seemed to myself to expand in the sun. I loved it all; the steamer, the river, the trees, the houses, my fellow-passengers, everything. I felt inclined to kiss something, no matter what; it was love, laying its snare. Presently, at the Trocadéro, a girl, with a small parcel in her hand, came on board and sat down opposite me. She was decidedly pretty; but it is surprising, Monsieur, how much prettier women seem to us when the day is fine, at the beginning of the spring. Then they have an intoxicating charm, something quite peculiar about them. It is just like drinking wine after cheese.

"I looked at her, and she also looked at me, but only occasionally, as that girl did at you, just now; but at last, by dint of looking at each other constantly, it seemed to me that we knew each other well enough to enter into conversation, and I spoke to her, and she replied. She was decidedly pretty and nice, and she intoxicated me, Monsieur!

"She got out at the Saint-Cloud, and I followed her. She went and delivered her parcel, and when she returned, the boat had just started. I walked by her side, and the warmth of the air made us both sigh. 'It would be very nice in the woods,' I said.



‘ Indeed, it would! ’ she replied. ‘ Shall we go there for a walk, Mademoiselle? ’

“ She gave me a quick, upward look, as if to see exactly what I was like, and then, after a little hesitation, she accepted my proposal, and soon we were there, walking side by side. Under the foliage, which was still rather scanty, the tall, thick, bright green grass, was inundated by the sun, and the air full of small insects that were also making love to one another, and birds were singing in all directions. My companion began to jump and to run, intoxicated by the air and the smell of the country, and I ran and jumped, following her example. How silly we are at times, Monsieur!

“ Then she sang unrestrainedly a thousand things; opera airs, and the song of *Musette*! The song of *Musette*! How poetical it seemed to me, then! I almost cried over it. Ah! Those silly songs make us lose our heads; and, believe me, never marry a woman who sings in the country, especially if she sings the song of *Musette*!

“ She soon grew tired, and sat down on a grassy slope, and I sat at her feet, and took her hands, her little hands, that were so marked with the needle, and that filled me with emotion. I said to myself: ‘ These are the sacred marks of toil.’ Oh! Monsieur, do you know what those sacred marks of labor mean? They mean all the gossip of the workroom, the whispered blackguardism, the mind soiled by all the filth that is talked; they mean lost chastity, foolish chatter, all the wretchedness of daily bad habits, all the narrowness of ideas which belongs to women of the lower orders, united in the girl whose sacred fingers bear the sacred marks of toil.

“ Then we looked into each other’s eyes for a

long while. Oh! What power a woman's eye has! How it agitates us, how it invades our very being, takes possession of us, and dominates us! How profound it seems, how full of infinite promises! People call that looking into each others' souls! Oh! Monsieur, what humbug! If we could see into each others' souls, we should be more careful of what we did. However, I was captivated, and was crazy about her, and tried to take her into my arms, but she said: 'Paws off!' Then I knelt down, and opened my heart to her, and poured out all the affection that was suffocating me. She seemed surprised at my change of manner, and gave me a side-long glance, as if to say: 'Ah! So that is the way women make a fool of you, old fellow! Very well, we will see.' In love, Monsieur, we are all artists, and women are the dealers.

"No doubt I could have had her, and I saw my own stupidity later, but what I wanted was not a woman's person, it was love, it was the ideal. I was sentimental, when I ought to have been using my time to a better purpose.

"As soon as she had had enough of my declarations of affection, she got up, and we returned to Saint-Cloud, and I did not leave her until we got to Paris; but she had looked so sad as we were returning, that at last I asked her what was the matter. 'I am thinking,' she replied; 'that this has been one of those days of which we have but few in life.' And my heart beat so that it felt as if it would break my ribs.

"I saw her on the following Sunday, and the next Sunday, and every Sunday. I took her to Bougival, Saint-Germain, Maison-Laffitte, Poissy; to every suburban resort of lovers.

“The little jade, in turn, pretended to love me, until, at last, I altogether lost my head, and three months later I married her.

“What can you expect, Monsieur, when a man is a clerk, living alone, without any relations, or any one to advise him? One says to one’s self: ‘How sweet life would be with a wife!’

“And so one gets married, and she calls you names from morning till night, understands nothing, knows nothing, chatters continually, sings the song of *Musette* at the top of her voice (oh! that song of *Musette*, how tired one gets of it!); quarrels with the charcoal dealer, tells the porter all her domestic details, confides all the secrets of her bedroom to the neighbor’s servant, discusses her husband with the tradespeople, and has her head so stuffed with stupid stories, with idiotic superstitions, with extraordinary ideas and monstrous prejudices, that I—for what I have said applies more particularly to myself—shed tears of discouragement every time I talked to her.”

He stopped, as he was rather out of breath and very much moved, and I looked at him, for I felt pity for this poor, artless devil, and I was just going to give him some sort of answer, when the boat stopped. We were at Saint-Cloud.

The little woman who had so taken my fancy rose from her seat in order to land. She passed close to me, and gave me a side glance and a furtive smile, one of those smiles that drive you wild; then she jumped on the landing-stage. I sprang forward to follow her, but my neighbor laid hold of my arm. I shook myself loose, however, whereupon he seized the skirt of my coat, and pulled me back, exclaiming: “You shall not go! You shall not go!” in

such a loud voice that everybody turned round and laughed, and I remained standing motionless and furious, but without venturing to face scandal and ridicule, and the steamboat started.

The little woman on the landing-stage looked at me as I went off with an air of disappointment, while my persecutor rubbed his hands and whispered to me:

“ You must acknowledge that I have done you a great service.”



## MADemoiselle FIFI



MAJOR GRAF VON FARLSBERG, the Prussian commandant, was reading his newspaper as he lay back in a great easy-chair, with his booted feet on the beautiful marble mantelpiece, where his spurs had made two holes, which had grown deeper every day during the three months that he had been in the château of Uville.

A cup of coffee was smoking on a small inlaid table, which was stained with liqueur, burned by cigars, notched by the penknife of the victorious officer, who occasionally would stop while sharpening a pencil, to jot down figures, or to make a drawing on it, just as it took his fancy.

When he had read his letters and the German newspapers, which his orderly had brought him, he got up, and after throwing three or four enormous pieces of green wood on the fire, for these gentlemen were gradually cutting down the park in order to keep themselves warm, he went to the window.



The rain was descending in torrents, a regular Normandy rain, which looked as if it were being poured out by some furious person, a slanting rain, opaque as a curtain, which formed a kind of wall with diagonal stripes, and which deluged everything, a rain such as one frequently experiences in the neighborhood of Rouen, which is the watering-pot of France.



For a long time the officer looked at the sodden turf, and at the swollen Andelle beyond it, which was overflowing its banks; he was drumming a waltz with his fingers on the window-panes, when a noise

made him turn round; it was his second in command, Captain Baron van Kelweinstein.

The Major was a giant, with broad shoulders and a long, blond beard, which hung down like a curtain to his chest. His whole solemn person suggested the idea of a military peacock, a peacock who was carrying his tail spread out on his breast. He had cold, gentle, blue eyes, and a scar from a sword-cut, which he had received in the war with Austria; he was said to be an honorable man, as well as a brave officer.

The captain, a short, red-faced man, was tightly belted in at the waist, his red hair was cropped quite close to his head, and in certain lights he almost looked as if he had been rubbed over with phosphorus. He had lost two front teeth one night, though he could not quite remember how, and this sometimes made him speak unintelligibly, and he had a bald patch on top of his head surrounded by a fringe of curly, bright, golden hair, which made him look like a monk.

The Commandant shook hands with him and drank his cup of coffee (the sixth that morning), while he listened to his subordinate's report of what had occurred; and then they both went to the window, and declared that it was a very unpleasant outlook. The Major, who was a quiet man, with a wife at home, could accommodate himself to everything; but the Captain, who led a fast life, who was in the habit of frequenting low resorts, and enjoyed women's society, was angry at having to be shut up for three months in that wretched hole.

There was a knock at the door, and when the Commandant said: "Come in," one of the orderlies appeared, and by his mere presence announced that breakfast was ready. In the dining-room they met three other officers of lower rank—a lieutenant, Otto von Grossling, and two sub-lieutenants, Fritz Scheuneburg and Baron von Eyrick, a very short, fair-haired man, who was proud and brutal toward men, harsh toward prisoners, and as explosive as gunpowder.

Since he had been in France, his comrades had called him nothing but Mademoiselle Fifi. They had given him that nickname on account of his dandified style and small waist, which looked as if

he wore corsets, of his pale face, on which his budding mustache scarcely showed, and on account of the habit he had acquired of employing the French expression, *fi, fi, donc*, which he pronounced with a slight whistle, when he wished to express his sovereign contempt for persons or things.

The dining-room of the château was a magnificent long room, whose fine old mirrors, that were cracked by pistol bullets, and whose Flemish tapestry, which was cut to ribbons, and hanging in rags in places from sword-cuts, told too well what Mademoiselle Fifi's occupation was during his spare time.

There were three family portraits on the walls: a steel-clad knight, a cardinal, and a judge, who were all smoking long porcelain pipes, which had been inserted into holes in the canvas, while a lady in a long, pointed waist proudly exhibited a pair of enormous mustaches, drawn with charcoal. The officers ate their breakfast almost in silence in that mutilated room, which looked dull in the rain and melancholy in its dilapidated condition, although its old oak floor had become as solid as the stone floor of an inn.

When they had finished eating, and were smoking and drinking, they began, as usual, to berate the dull life they were leading. The bottles of brandy and of liqueur passed from hand to hand, and all sat back in their chairs and took repeated sips from their glasses, scarcely removing from their mouths the long, curved stems, which terminated in china bowls, painted in a manner to delight a Hottentot.

As soon as their glasses were empty they filled them again, with a gesture of resigned weariness, but Mademoiselle Fifi emptied his every minute, and a soldier immediately gave him another. They were

enveloped in a cloud of strong tobacco smoke, and seemed to be sunk in a state of drowsy, stupid intoxication, that condition of stupid intoxication of men who have nothing to do, when suddenly the Baron sat up, and said: "Heavens! This cannot go on; we must think of something to do." And on hearing this, Lieutenant Otto and Sub-lieutenant Fritz, who preëminently possessed the serious, heavy German countenance, said: "What, Captain?"

He thought for a few moments, and then replied: "What? Why, we must get up some entertainment, if the Commandant will allow us." "What sort of an entertainment, Captain?" the Major asked, taking his pipe out of his mouth. "I will arrange all that, Commandant," the Baron said. "I will send Le Devoir to Rouen, and he will bring back some ladies. I know where they can be found. We will have supper here, as all the materials are at hand, and, at least, we shall have a jolly evening."

Graf von Farlsberg shrugged his shoulders with a smile: "You must surely be mad, my friend."

But all the other officers had risen and surrounded their chief, saying: "Let the Captain have his way, Commandant; it is terribly dull here." And the Major ended by yielding. "Very well," he replied, and the Baron immediately sent for Le Devoir. He was an old non-commissioned officer, who had never been seen to smile, but who carried out all the orders of his superiors to the letter, no matter what they might be. He stood there, with an impassible face, while he received the Baron's instructions, and then went out, and five minutes later a large military wagon, covered with tarpaulin, galloped off as fast as four horses could draw it, under the pouring rain. The officers all seemed to

awaken from their lethargy, their looks brightened, and they began to talk.

Although it was raining as hard as ever, the Major declared that it was not so dark, and Lieutenant von Grossling said with conviction that the sky was clearing up, while Mademoiselle Fifi did not seem to be able to keep still. He got up, and sat down again, and his bright eyes seemed to be looking for something to destroy. Suddenly, looking at the lady with the mustaches, the young fellow pulled out his revolver, and said: "You shall not see it." And without leaving his seat he aimed, and with two successive bullets cut out both the eyes of the portrait.

"Let us make a mine!" he then exclaimed, and the conversation was suddenly interrupted, as if they had found some fresh and powerful subject of interest. The mine was his invention, his method of destruction, and his favorite amusement.

When he left the château, the lawful owner, Comte Fernand d'Amoys d'Uville, had not had time to carry away or to hide anything, except the plate, which had been stowed away in a hole made in one of the walls. As he was very rich and had good taste, the large drawing-room, which opened into the dining-room, looked like a gallery in a museum, before his precipitate flight.

Expensive oil paintings, water colors, and drawings hung against the walls, while on the tables, on the hanging shelves, and in elegant glass cupboards, there were a thousand ornaments: small vases, statuettes, groups of Dresden china, and grotesque Chinese figures, old ivory, and Venetian glass, which filled the large room with their costly and fantastic array.



Scarcely anything was left now; not that the things had been stolen, for the Major would not have allowed that, but Mademoiselle Fifi would have a mine, and on that occasion all the officers thoroughly enjoyed themselves for five minutes. The little Marquis went into the drawing-room to get what he wanted, and he brought back a small, delicate china teapot, which he filled with gunpowder, and carefully introduced a piece of punk through the spout. This he lighted, and took his infernal machine into the next room; but he came back immediately, and shut the door. The Germans all stood expectant, their faces full of childish, smiling curiosity, and as soon as the explosion had shaken the château, they all rushed in at once.

Mademoiselle Fifi, who got in first, clapped his hands in delight at the sight of a terra-cotta Venus, whose head had been blown off, and each picked up pieces of porcelain, and wondered at the strange shape of the fragments, while the Major was looking with a paternal eye at the large drawing-room, which had been wrecked after the fashion of a Nero, and was strewn with the fragments of works of art. He went out first and said, with a smile: "He managed that very well!"

But there was such a cloud of smoke in the dining-room, mingled with the tobacco smoke, that they could not breathe, so the Commandant opened the window, and all the officers, who had returned for a last glass of cognac, went up to it.

The moist air blew into the room, bringing with it a sort of powdery spray, which sprinkled their beards. They looked at the tall trees which were dripping with rain, at the broad valley which was covered with mist, and at the church spire in the

distance, which rose up like a gray point in the beating rain.

The bells had not rung since their arrival. That was the only resistance which the invaders had met with in the neighborhood. The parish priest had not refused to take in and to feed the Prussian soldiers; he had several times even drunk a bottle of beer or claret with the hostile Commandant, who often employed him as a benevolent intermediary; but it was no use to ask him for a single stroke of the bells; he would sooner have allowed himself to be shot. That was his way of protesting against the invasion, a peaceful and silent protest, the only one, he said, which was suitable to a priest, who was a man of mildness, and not of blood; and every one, for twenty-five miles round, praised Abbé Chantavoine's firmness and heroism, in venturing to proclaim the public mourning by the obstinate silence of his church bells.

The whole village, enthusiastic at his resistance, was ready to back up their pastor and to risk anything, as they looked upon that silent protest as the safeguard of the national honor. It seemed to the peasants that thus they deserved better of their country than Belfort and Strassburg, that they had set an equally valuable example, and that the name of their little village would become immortalized by that; but with that exception, they refused their Prussian conquerors nothing.

The Commandant and his officers laughed among themselves at that inoffensive courage, and as the people in the whole country round showed themselves obliging and compliant toward them, they willingly tolerated their silent patriotism. Little Baron Wilhelm alone would have liked to have

forced them to ring the bells. He was very angry at his superior's politic compliance with the priest's scruples, and every day begged the Commandant to allow him to sound "ding-dong, ding-dong," just once, only just once, just by way of a joke. And he asked it in the coaxing, tender voice of some loved woman who is bent on obtaining her wish; but the Commandant would not yield, and to console herself Mademoiselle Fifi made a mine in the Château d'Uville.

The five men stood there together for some minutes, breathing in the moist air, and at last, Lieutenant Fritz said, with a laugh. "The ladies will certainly not have fine weather for their drive." Then they separated, each to his duty, while the Captain had plenty to do in arranging for the dinner.

When they met again toward evening, they began to laugh at seeing each other as dandified and smart as on the day of a grand review. The Commandant's hair did not look so gray as it was in the morning, and the Captain had shaved, leaving only his mustache, which made him look as if he had a streak of fire under his nose.

In spite of the rain, they left the window open, and one of them went to listen from time to time; and at a quarter past six the Baron said he heard a rumbling in the distance. They all rushed down, and presently the wagon drove up at a gallop with its four horses, steaming and blowing, and splashed with mud to their girths. Five women dismounted, five handsome girls whom a comrade of the Captain, to whom Le Devoir had presented his card, had selected with care.

They had not required much pressing, as they

had got to know the Prussians in the three months during which they had had to do with them, and so they resigned themselves to the men as they did to the state of affairs.

They went at once into the dining-room, which looked still more dismal in its dilapidated condition when it was lighted up; while the table covered with choice dishes, the beautiful china and glass, and the plate, which had been found in the hole in the wall where its owner had hidden it, gave it the appearance of a bandits' inn, where they were supping after committing a robbery in the place. The Captain was radiant, and put his arm round the women as if he were familiar with them; and when the three young men wanted to appropriate one each, he opposed them authoritatively, reserving to himself the right to apportion them justly, according to their several ranks, so as not to offend the hierarchy. Therefore, to avoid all discussion, jarring, and suspicion of partiality, he placed them all in a line according to height, and addressing the tallest, he said in a voice of command:

"What is your name?" "Pamela," she replied, raising her voice. And then he said: "Number One, called Pamela, is adjudged to the Commandant." Then, having kissed Blondina, the second, as a sign of proprietorship, he proffered stout Amanda to Lieutenant Otto; Eva, the Tomato, to Sub-lieutenant Fritz, and Rachel, the shortest of them all, a very young, dark girl, with eyes as black as ink, a Jewess, whose snub nose proved the rule which allots hooked noses to her race, to the youngest officer, frail Count Wilhelm d'Eyrick.

They were all pretty and plump, without any

distinctive features, and all had a similarity of complexion and figure.

The three younger men wished to carry off their prizes immediately, under the pretext that they might wish to freshen their toilets; but the Captain wisely opposed this, for he said they were quite fit to sit down to dinner, and his experience in such matters carried the day. There were only many kisses, expectant kisses.

Suddenly Rachel choked, and began to cough until the tears came into her eyes, while smoke came through her nostrils. Under pretence of kissing her, the Count had blown a whiff of tobacco into her mouth. She did not fly into a rage, and did not say a word, but she looked at her tormentor with latent hatred in her dark eyes.

They sat down to dinner. The Commandant seemed delighted; he made Pamela sit on his right, and Blondina on his left, and said, as he unfolded his table napkin: "That was a delightful idea of yours, Captain."

Lieutenants Otto and Fritz, who were as polite as if they had been with fashionable ladies, rather intimidated their guests, but Baron von Kelweinstein beamed, made obscene remarks, and seemed on fire with his crown of red hair. He paid the women compliments in French of the Rhine, and sputtered out gallant remarks, only fit for a low pot-house, from between his two broken teeth.

They did not understand him, however, and their intelligence did not seem to be awakened until he uttered nasty words and broad expressions, which were mangled by his accent. Then they all began to laugh at once, like crazy women, and fell against each other, repeating the words, which the Baron



then began to say all wrong, in order that he might have the pleasure of hearing them say dirty things. They gave him as much of that stuff as he wanted, for they were drunk after the first bottle of wine, and, becoming their usual selves once more, and resuming their usual habits, they kissed the officers to right and left of them, pinched their arms, uttered wild cries, drank out of every glass, and sang French couplets and bits of German songs which they had picked up in their daily intercourse with the enemy.

Soon the men themselves became very unrestrained, shouted, and broke the plates and dishes, while the soldiers behind them waited on them stolidly. The Commandant was the only one who put any restraint upon himself.

Mademoiselle Fifi had taken Rachel on his knee, and, getting excited, at one moment kissed the little black curls on her neck, and at another he pinched her furiously and made her scream, for he was seized by a species of ferocity, and tormented by his desire to hurt her. He often held her close to him, and pressed a long kiss on the Jewess's rosy mouth, until she lost her breath; and at last he bit her until a stream of blood ran down her chin and on to her bodice.

For the second time she looked him full in the face, and as she bathed the wound, she said: "You will have to pay for that!" But he merely laughed a hard laugh, and said: "I will pay."

At dessert champagne was served, and the Commandant rose, and in the same voice in which he would have drunk to the health of the Empress Augusta, he drank: "To our ladies!" And a series of toasts began, toasts worthy of the lowest soldiers

and of drunkards, mingled with obscene jokes, which were made still more brutal by their ignorance of the language. They got up, one after the other, trying to say something witty, forcing themselves to be funny, and the women, who were so drunk that they almost fell off their chairs, with vacant looks and clammy tongues, applauded madly each time.

The Captain, who no doubt wished to impart an appearance of gallantry to the orgy, raised his glass again, and said: "To our victories over hearts!" And thereupon Lieutenant Otto, who was a species of bear from the Black Forest, jumped up, inflamed and saturated with drink, and suddenly seized by an access of alcoholic patriotism, he cried: "To our victories over France!"

Drunk as they were, the women were silent, but Rachel turned round with a shudder, and said: "Look here, I know some Frenchmen in whose presence you would not dare to say that." But the little Count, still holding her on his knee, began to laugh, for the wine had made him very merry, and said: "Ha! ha! ha! I have never met any of them myself. As soon as we show ourselves they run away!" The girl, who was in a terrible rage, shouted into his face: "You are lying, you dirty scoundrel!"

For a moment he looked at her steadily with his bright eyes upon her, as he had looked at the portrait before he destroyed it with bullets from his revolver, and then he began to laugh: "Ah! yes, talk about them, my dear! Should we be here now if they were brave?" And, getting excited, he exclaimed: "We are the masters! France belongs to us!" She made one spring from his knee, and threw herself into her chair, while he rose, held

out his glass over the table, and repeated: "France and the French, the woods, the fields, and the houses of France belong to us!"

The others, who were quite drunk, and who were suddenly seized by military enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of brutes, seized their glasses, and shouting: "Long live Prussia!" they emptied them at a draught.

The girls did not protest, for they were reduced to silence, and were afraid. Even Rachel did not say a word, as she had no reply to make, and then the little Marquis put his champagne glass, which had just been refilled, on the head of the Jewess, and exclaimed: "All the women in France belong to us, also!"

At that she got up so quickly that the glass upset, spilling the amber-colored wine on her black hair as if to baptize her, and broke into a hundred fragments, as it fell to the floor. Her lips trembling, she defied the looks of the officer, who was still laughing, and stammered out, in a voice choked with rage: "That . . . that . . . that . . . is not true . . . for you shall not have the women of France!"

He sat down again so as to laugh at his ease; and, trying to speak with the Parisian accent, he said: "She is good, very good! Then why did you come here, my dear?" She was thunderstruck and made no reply for a moment, for in her agitation she did not understand him at first; but as soon as she grasped his meaning she said to him indignantly and vehemently: "I! I! I am not a woman, I am only a strumpet, and that is all that Prussians want."

Almost before she had finished he slapped her

full in the face; but as he was raising his hand again, as if to strike her, she seized a small dessert knife with a silver blade from the table and, almost mad with rage, stabbed him right in the hollow of his neck. Something that he was going to say was cut short in his throat, and he sat there with his mouth half open and a terrible look in his eyes.

All the officers shouted in horror and leaped up tumultuously; but, throwing her chair between the legs of Lieutenant Otto, who fell down at full length, she ran to the window, opened it before they could seize her, and jumped out into the night and the pouring rain.

In two minutes Mademoiselle Fifi was dead, and Fritz and Otto drew their swords and wanted to kill the women, who threw themselves at their feet and clung to their knees. With some difficulty the Major stopped the slaughter, and had the four terrified girls locked up in a room under the care of two soldiers, and then he organized the pursuit of the fugitive, as carefully as if were about to engage in a skirmish, feeling quite sure that she would be caught.

The table, which had been cleared immediately, now served as a bed on which to lay out the lieutenant, and the four officers stood at the windows, rigid and sobered, with the stern faces of soldiers on duty, and tried to pierce through the darkness of the night amid the steady torrent of rain. Suddenly a shot was heard, and then another, a long way off; and for four hours they heard from time to time near or distant reports and rallying cries, strange words of challenge, uttered in guttural voices.

In the morning they all returned. Two soldiers

had been killed and three others wounded by their comrades in the ardor of that chase and in the confusion of that nocturnal pursuit, but they had not caught Rachel.

Then the inhabitants of the district were terrorized, the houses were turned topsy-turvy, the country was scoured and beaten up, over and over again, but the Jewess did not seem to have left a single trace of her passage behind her.

When the General was told of it he gave orders to hush up the affair, so as not to set a bad example to the army, but he severely censured the Commandant, who in turn punished his inferiors. The General had said: "One does not go to war in order to amuse one's self and to caress prostitutes." Graf von Farlsberg, in his exasperation, made up his mind to have his revenge on the district, but as he required a pretext for showing severity, he sent for the priest, and ordered him to have the bell tolled at the funeral of Baron von Eyrick.

Contrary to all expectation, the priest showed himself humble and most respectful, and when Mademoiselle Fifi's body left the Château d'Uville on its way to the cemetery, carried by soldiers, preceded, surrounded, and followed by soldiers who marched with loaded rifles, for the first time the bell sounded its funeral knell in a lively manner, as if a friendly hand were caressing it. At night it rang again, and the next day, and every day; it rang as much as any one could desire. Sometimes even it would start at night, and sound gently through the darkness, seized by strange joy, awakened one could not tell why. All the peasants in the neighborhood declared that it was bewitched, and nobody except the priest and the sacristan



would now go near the church tower, and they went because a poor girl was living there in grief and solitude, and provided for secretly by those two men.

She remained there until the German troops departed, and then one evening the priest borrowed the baker's cart, and himself drove his prisoner to Rouen. When they got there he embraced her, and she quickly went back on foot to the establishment from which she had come, where the proprietress, who thought that she was dead, was very glad to see her.

A short time afterward a patriot who had no prejudices, and who liked her because of her bold deed, and who afterward loved her for herself, married her, and she made a lady quite as good as many others.



## AN ARTIFICE



THE old doctor sat by the fireside, talking to his fair patient who was lying on the lounge. There was nothing much the matter with her, except that she had one of those little feminine ailments from which pretty women frequently suffer—slight anæmia, a nervous attack, etc.

“No, doctor,” she said; “I shall never be able to understand a woman deceiving her husband. Even allowing that she does not love him, that she pays no heed to her vows and promises, how can she give herself to another man? How can she conceal the intrigue from other people’s eyes? How can it be possible to love amid lies and treason?”

The doctor smiled, and replied: “It is perfectly easy, and I can assure you that a woman does not think of all those little subtle details when she has made up her mind to go astray.

"As for dissimulation, all women have plenty of it on hand for such occasions, and the simplest of them are wonderful, and extricate themselves from the greatest dilemmas in a remarkable manner."

The young woman, however, seemed incredulous . . . "No, doctor," she said; "one never thinks until after it has happened of what one ought to have done in a critical situation, and women are certainly more liable than men to lose their head on such occasions."

The doctor raised his hands. "After it has happened, you say! Now I will tell you something that happened to one of my female patients, whom I always considered as an immaculate woman.

"It happened in a provincial town, and one night when I was asleep, in that deep, first sleep from which it is so difficult to rouse us, it seemed to me, in my dreams, as if the bells in the town were sounding a fire alarm, and I woke up with a start. It was my own bell, which was ringing wildly, and as my footman did not seem to be answering the door, I, in turn, pulled the bell at the head of my bed, and soon I heard a banging, and steps in the silent house, and Jean came into my room, and handed me a letter which said: 'Madame Lelièvre begs Doctor Siméon to come to her immediately.'

"I thought for a few moments, and then I said to myself: 'A nervous attack, vapors; nonsense, I am too tired.' And so I replied: 'As Doctor Siméon is not at all well, he must beg Madame Lelièvre to be kind enough to call in his colleague, Monsieur Bonnet.' I put the note into an envelop and went to sleep again, but about half an hour later the street bell rang again, and Jean came to me and said: 'There is somebody downstairs; I

do not quite know whether it is a man or a woman, as the individual is so wrapped up, but they wish to speak to you immediately. They say it is a matter of life and death for two people.' Whereupon I sat up in bed and told him to show the person in.

"A kind of black phantom appeared and raised her veil as soon as Jean had left the room. It was Madame Berthe Lelièvre, quite a young woman, who had been married for three years to a large merchant in the town, who was said to have married the prettiest girl in the neighborhood.

"She was terribly pale, her face was contracted as the faces of mad people are, occasionally, and her hands trembled violently. Twice she tried to speak without being able to utter a sound, but at last she stammered out: 'Come . . . quick . . . quick, doctor. . . . Come . . .



my . . . friend has just died in my bedroom.' She stopped, half suffocated with emotion, and then went on: 'My husband will . . . be coming home from the club very soon.'

"I jumped out of bed without even considering that I was only in my night-shirt, and dressed myself in a few moments, and then I said: 'Did you come a short time ago?' 'No,' she said, standing like a statue petrified with horror. 'It was my servant . . . she knows.' And then, after a short silence, she went on: 'I was there . . . by his side.' And she uttered a sort of cry of horror, and after a fit of choking, which made her gasp, she wept violently, and shook with spasmodic sobs for a minute or two. Then her tears suddenly ceased, as if by an internal fire, and with an air of tragic calmness, she said: 'Let us make haste.'

"I was ready, but exclaimed: 'I quite forgot to order my carriage.' 'I have one,' she said; 'it is his, which was waiting for him!' She wrapped herself up, so as to completely conceal her face, and we started.

"When she was by my side in the carriage she suddenly seized my hand, and crushing it in her delicate fingers, she said, with a shaking voice, that proceeded from a distracted heart: 'Oh! If you only knew, if you only knew what I am suffering! I loved him, I have loved him distractedly, like a madwoman, for the last six months.' 'Is any one up in your house?' I asked. 'No, nobody except Rose, who knows everything.'

"We stopped at the door, and evidently everybody was asleep. We went in without making any noise, by means of her latch-key, and walked upstairs on tiptoe. The frightened servant was sit-



ting on the top of the stairs with a lighted candle by her side, as she was afraid to remain with the dead man, and I went into the room, which was in great disorder. Wet towels, with which they had bathed the young man's temples, were lying on the floor, by the side of a washbasin and a glass, while a strong smell of vinegar pervaded the room.

"The dead man's body was lying at full length in the middle of the room, and I went up to it, looked at it, and touched it. I opened the eyes and felt the hands, and then, turning to the two women, who were shaking as if they were frozen, I said to them: 'Help me to lift him upon the bed.' When we had laid him gently onto it, I listened to his heart and put a looking-glass to his lips, and then said: 'It is all over.' It was a terrible sight!

"I looked at the man, and said: 'You ought to arrange his hair a little.' The girl went and brought her mistress's comb and brush, but as she was trembling, and pulling out his long, matted hair in doing it, Madame Lelièvre took the comb out of her hand, and arranged his hair as if she were caressing him. She parted it, brushed his beard, rolled his mustaches gently round her fingers, then, suddenly, letting go of his hair, she took the dead man's inert head in her hands and looked for a long time in despair at the dead face, which no longer could smile at her, and then, throwing herself on him, she clasped him in her arms and kissed him ardently. Her kisses fell like blows on his closed mouth and eyes, his forehead and temples; and then, putting her lips to his ear, as if he could still hear her, and as if she were about to whisper something to him, she said several times, in a heartrending voice: 'Good-by, my darling!'

"Just then the clock struck twelve, and I started up. 'Twelve o'clock!' I exclaimed. 'That is the time when the club closes. Come, Madame, we have not a moment to lose!' She started up, and I said: 'We must carry him into the drawing-room.' And when we had done this, I placed him on a sofa, and lit the chandeliers, and just then the front door was opened and shut noisily. Her husband had come back, and I said: 'Rose, bring me the basin and the towels, and make the room look tidy. Make haste, for Heaven's sake! Monsieur Lelièvre is coming in.'

"I heard his steps on the stairs, and then his hands feeling along the walls. 'Come here, my dear fellow,' I said; 'we have had an accident.'

"And the astonished husband appeared in the door with a cigar in his mouth, and said: 'What is the matter? What is the meaning of this?' 'My dear friend,' I said, going up to him, 'you find us in great embarrassment. I had remained late, chatting with your wife and our friend, who had brought me in his carriage, when he suddenly fainted, and in spite of all we have done, he has remained unconscious for two hours. I did not like to call in strangers, and if you will now help me downstairs with him, I shall be able to attend to him better at his own house.'

"The husband, who was surprised, but quite unsuspecting, took off his hat, and then he took his rival, who would be quite inoffensive for the future, under the arms. I got between his two legs, as if I had been a horse between the shafts, and we went downstairs, while his wife held a light for us. When we got outside I stood the body up, so

as to deceive the coachman, and said: 'Come, my friend; it is nothing; you feel better already, I expect. Pluck up your courage, and make an effort. It will soon be over.' But as I felt that he was slipping out of my hands, I gave him a slap on the shoulder, which sent him forward and made him fall into the carriage, and then I got in after him. Monsieur Lelièvre, who was rather alarmed, said to me: 'Do you think it is anything serious?' To which I replied: 'No,' with a smile, as I looked at his wife, who had put her arm into that of her husband, and was trying to see into the carriage.

"I shook hands with them and told the coachman to start, and during the whole drive the dead man kept falling against me. When we got to his house I said that he had become unconscious on the way home, and helped to carry him upstairs, where I certified that he was dead, and acted another comedy to his distracted family, and at last I got back to bed, not without swearing at lovers."

The doctor ceased, though he was still smiling, and the young woman, who was in a very nervous state, said: "Why have you told me that terrible story?"

He gave her a gallant bow, and replied:

"So that I may offer you my services if they should be needed."



## A DUEL



THE war was over. The Germans occupied France. The whole country was pulsating like a conquered wrestler beneath the knee of his victorious opponent.

The first trains from Paris, distracted, starving, despairing Paris, were making their way to the new frontiers, slowly passing through the country districts and the villages. The passengers gazed through the windows at the ravaged fields and burned hamlets. Prussian soldiers, in their black helmets with brass spikes, were smoking their pipes astride their chairs in front of the houses which were still left standing. Others were working or talking just as if they were members of the families. As you passed through the different towns you saw entire regiments drilling in the squares, and, in spite of the rumble of the carriage-

wheels, you could every moment hear the hoarse words of command.

M. Dubuis, who during the entire siege had served as one of the National Guard in Paris, was going to join his wife and daughter, whom he had prudently sent away to Switzerland before the invasion.

Famine and hardship had not diminished his big paunch, so characteristic of the rich, peace-loving merchant. He had gone through the terrible events of the past year with sorrowful resignation and bitter complaints at the savagery of men. Now that he was journeying to the frontier at the close of the war, he saw the Prussians for the first time, although he had done his duty on the ramparts and mounted guard on many a cold night.

He stared with mingled fear and anger at those bearded, armed men, installed all over French soil as if they were at home, and he felt in his soul a kind of fever of impotent patriotism, at the same time also the great need of that new instinct of prudence which since then has never left us. In the same railway carriage were two Englishmen, who had come to the country as sightseers and were gazing around with looks of quiet curiosity. They were both also stout, and kept chattering in their own language, sometimes referring to their guide-book, and reading in loud tones the names of the places indicated.

Suddenly the train stopped at a little village station, and a Prussian officer jumped up with a great clatter of his saber on the double footboard of the railway carriage. He was tall, wore a tight-fitting uniform, and had whiskers up to his eyes. His red hair seemed to be on fire, and his long mus-



tache, of a paler hue, stuck out on both sides of his face, which it seemed to cut in two.

The Englishmen at once began staring at him with smiles of newly awakened interest, while M. Dubuis made a show of reading a newspaper. He sat concealed in his corner like a thief in presence of a gendarme.

The train started again. The Englishmen went on chatting, and looking out for the exact scene of different battles; and all of a sudden, as one of them stretched out his arm toward the horizon as he pointed out a village, the Prussian officer remarked in French, extending his long legs and lolling backward:

"I killed a dozen Frenchmen in that village, and took more than a hundred prisoners."

The Englishman, quite interested, immediately asked:

"Ha! and what is the name of this village?"

The Prussian replied:

"Pharsbourg." He added: "We caught those French scoundrels by the ears."

And he glanced toward M. Dubuis, laughing conceitedly into his mustache.

The train rolled on, still passing through hamlets occupied by the victorious army. German soldiers could be seen along the roads, on the edges of fields, standing in front of gates, or chatting outside cafés. They covered the soil like African locusts.

The officer said, with a wave of his hand:

"If I had been in command, I'd have taken Paris, burned everything, killed everybody. No more France!"

The Englishman, through politeness, replied:

"Ah! yes."

He went on:

"In twenty years all Europe, all of it, will belong to us. Prussia is more than a match for all of them."

The Englishmen, getting uneasy, no longer replied. Their faces, which had become impassive, seemed made of wax behind their long whiskers. Then the Prussian officer began to laugh. And still, lolling back, he began to sneer. He sneered at the downfall of France, insulted the prostrate enemy; he sneered at Austria, which had been recently conquered; he sneered at the furious but fruitless defence of the departments; he sneered at the Garde Mobile and at the useless artillery. He announced that Bismarck was going to build a city of iron with the captured cannon. And suddenly he pushed his boots against the thigh of M. Dubuis, who turned away his eyes, reddening to the roots of his hair.

The Englishmen seemed to have become indifferent to all that was going on, as if they were suddenly shut up in their own island, far from the din of the world.

The officer took out his pipe, and looking fixedly at the Frenchman, said:

"You haven't any tobacco—have you?"

M. Dubuis replied:

"No, Monsieur."

The German said:

"You might go and buy some for me when the train stops."

And he began laughing afresh, as he added:

"I'll give you the price of a drink."

The train whistled, and slackened its pace. They

passed a station that had been burned down; and then they stopped altogether.

The German opened the carriage door, and, catching M. Dubuis by the arm, said:

“Go and do what I told you—quick, quick!”

A Prussian detachment occupied the station. Other soldiers were standing behind wooden gratings, looking on. The engine was getting up steam before starting off again. Then M. Dubuis hurriedly jumped on the platform, and, in spite of the warnings of the station master, dashed into the adjoining compartment.

\* \* \* \* \*

He was alone! He tore open his waistcoat, his heart was beating so rapidly, and, gasping for breath, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

The train drew up at another station. And suddenly the officer appeared at the carriage door, and jumped in, followed close behind by the two Englishmen, who were impelled by curiosity. The German sat facing the Frenchman, and, laughing still, said:

“You did not want to do what I asked you?”

M. Dubuis replied:

“No, Monsieur.”

The train had just left the station.

The officer said:

“I’ll cut off your mustache to fill my pipe with.”

And he put out his hand toward the Frenchman’s face.

The Englishmen stared at them, retaining their previous impassive manner.

The German had already pulled out a few hairs,

and was still tugging at the mustache, when M. Dubuis, with a back stroke of his hand, flung aside the officer's arm, and, seizing him by the collar, threw him down on the seat. Then, excited to a pitch of fury, his temples swollen and his eyes glaring, he kept throttling the officer with one hand, while with the other clinched he began to strike him violent blows in the face. The Prussian struggled, tried to draw his sword, to clinch with his adversary, who was on top of him. But M. Dubuis crushed him with his enormous weight, and kept punching him without taking breath or



knowing where his blows fell. Blood flowed down the face of the German, who, choking and with a rattling in his throat, spat out his broken teeth, and vainly strove to shake off this infuriated man who was killing him.

The Englishmen had got on their feet and came closer in order to see better. They remained standing, full of mirth and curiosity, ready to bet for or against either combatant.

Suddenly M. Dubuis, exhausted by his violent efforts, rose and resumed his seat without a word.

The Prussian did not attack him, for the savage assault had terrified and astonished the officer as well as causing him suffering. When he was able to breathe freely, he said:

"Unless you give me satisfaction with pistols, I will kill you."

M. Dubuis replied:

"Whenever you like. I'm quite ready."

The German said:

"Here is the town of Strasbourg. I'll get two officers to be my seconds, and there will be time before the train leaves the station."

M. Dubuis, who was puffing as much as the engine, said to the Englishmen:

"Will you be my seconds?" They both answered together:

"Oh, yes."

And the train stopped.

In a minute the Prussian had found two comrades, who brought pistols, and they made their way toward the ramparts.

The Englishmen were continually looking at their watches, shuffling their feet, and hurrying on with the preparations, uneasy lest they should be too late for the train.

M. Dubuis had never fired a pistol in his life.

They made him stand twenty paces away from his enemy. He was asked:

"Are you ready?"

While he was answering "Yes, Monsieur," he noticed that one of the Englishmen had opened his umbrella in order to keep off the rays of the sun.

A voice gave the signal:

"Fire!"

M. Dubuis fired at random without delay, and



he was amazed to see the Prussian opposite him stagger, lift up his arms, and fall forward, dead. He had killed the officer.

One of the Englishmen exclaimed: "Ah!" He was quivering with delight, with satisfied curiosity and joyous impatience. The other, who still kept his watch in his hand, seized M. Dubuis's arm, and hurried him in double-quick time toward the station, his fellow-countryman marking time as he ran beside them, with closed fists, his elbows at his sides, "One, two! one, two!"

And all three, running abreast rapidly, made their way to the station like three grotesque figures in a comic newspaper.

The train was on the point of starting. They sprang into their carriage. Then the Englishmen, taking off their traveling caps, waved them three times over their heads, exclaiming:

"Hip! hip! hip! hurrah!"

And gravely, one after the other, they extended their right hands to M. Dubuis, and then went back and sat down in their own corner.



## ROSALIE PRUDENT



HERE was a real mystery in this affair which neither the jury, nor the president, nor the public prosecutor himself could understand.

The girl Prudent (Rosalie), servant at the Varambots', of Nantes, having become *enceinte* without the knowledge of her masters, had been delivered during the night, in her garret room, and had then killed and buried her child in the garden.

It was the usual story of the infanticides committed by servant girls. But there was one inexplicable circumstance about this one. When the police searched the girl Prudent's room they discovered a complete infant's outfit, made by Rosalie herself, who had spent her nights for the last three months in cutting and sewing it. The grocer from whom she had bought her candles, out of her own wages, for this long piece of work had come to testify. It

came out, moreover, that the midwife of the district, informed by Rosalie of her condition, had given her all necessary instructions and counsel in case the event should happen at a time when it might not be possible to get help. And the midwife had also procured a place at Poissy for the girl Prudent, who foresaw that her present employers would discharge her, for the Varambot couple did not trifle with morality.

There were present at the trial both the man and the woman, a middle-class pair from the provinces, living on their income. They were exasperated against this streetwalker who had sullied their house. They would have liked to see her guillotined on the spot, without a trial, and the spiteful depositions they made against her became accusations in their mouths.

The defendant, a large, handsome girl of Lower Normandy, well educated for her station in life, wept continuously and would not answer to anything.

The Court and the spectators were forced to the opinion that she had committed this barbarous act in a moment of despair and madness, since there was every indication that she had expected to keep and bring up her child.

The president tried for the last time to make her speak, to get some confession; and, having urged her with much gentleness, he finally made her understand that all these men gathered here to pass judgment upon her were not anxious for her death, and might even have pity on her.

Then she made up her mind to speak.

"Come, now, tell us, first, who is the father of this child?" he asked.

Until then she had obstinately refused to give his name.

But she replied suddenly, looking at her masters who had so cruelly calumniated her:

"It is Monsieur Joseph, Monsieur Varambot's nephew."

The couple started in their seats and cried with one voice: "That's not true! She lies! This is infamous!"

The president had them silenced and continued: "Go on, please, and tell us how it all happened."

Then she suddenly began to talk freely, relieving her pent-up heart, that poor, solitary, crushed heart—laying bare her sorrow, her whole sorrow, before those severe men whom she had until now taken for enemies and inflexible judges.

"Yes, it was Monsieur Joseph Varambot, when he came on leave last year."

"What does Monsieur Joseph Varambot do?"

"He is a non-commissioned officer in the artillery, Monsieur. He was, therefore, two months at the house. Two months of the summer. I thought nothing about it when he began to look at me, and then flatter me, and make love to me all day long. And I let myself be taken in, Monsieur. He kept saying to me that I was a handsome girl, that I was good company, that I just suited him . . . and I, I liked him well enough. To be sure . . . one listens to these things when one is alone . . . all alone . . . as I was. I am alone in the world, Monsieur . . . I have no one to talk to . . . no one to tell my troubles . . . I have no father, no mother, no brother, no sister, nobody. And when he began to talk with me it was as if I had a brother who had come back. And then he asked me to go

with him to the river one evening, so that we might talk without disturbing any one. I went . . . I don't know . . . I don't know how it happened. . . . He had his arm around me. . . . Really I didn't want to . . . no . . . no. . . . I could not. . . . I felt like crying, the air was so soft . . . the moon was shining. . . . No, I swear to you . . . I could not . . . he did what he wanted. . . . There were three weeks more of this, so long as he stayed. . . . I could have followed him to the ends of the world . . . he went away . . . I did not know that I was with child. . . . I did not know it until the month after. . . .”

She began to cry so bitterly that they had to give her time to collect herself.

Then the president resumed, with the tone of a priest at the confessional: “Come, now, go on.”

She began to talk again: “When I saw that I was with child I went to see Madame Boudin, the midwife, who is there to tell you, and I asked her how it would be, in case it should come if she were not there. Then I made the outfit, sewing night after night, every evening until one o'clock in the morning; and then I looked for another place, for I knew very well that I should be sent away; but I wanted to stay in the house until the very last, so as to save my pennies, for I have not got very much and I should need my money for the little one. . . .”

“Then you did not intend to kill him?”

“Oh, certainly not, Monsieur!”

“Why did you kill him, then?”

“It happened this way. It came sooner than I expected. It came upon me in the kitchen, while I



was doing the dishes. Monsieur and Madame Varambot were already sleeping, so I went up, not without suffering, dragging myself up by the banister, and I lay down on the bare floor, so as not to soil my bed. It lasted perhaps one hour, or two, or three; I don't know, I had such pain; and then I pushed him out with all my strength. I felt that he came out, and I picked him up.

"Ah! but I was glad, I assure you! I did all that Madame Boudin told me to do. And then I laid him on my bed. And then such a pain griped me again that I thought I should die. If you knew what it meant, you there, you would not do so much of this. I fell on my knees, and then toppled over backward on the floor; and it griped me again, perhaps one hour, perhaps two. I lay there all alone . . . and then another one comes . . . another little one . . . two, yes, two, like this. I took him up as I did the first one, and then I put him on the bed, the two side by side. Is it possible, tell me, two children, and I who get only twenty francs a month? Say, is it possible? One, yes, that can be managed by going without things, but not two. That turned my head. What do I know about it? Say, could I choose between the two?

"I don't know. I felt as if my last hour had come. I put the pillow over them, without knowing. . . . I could not keep them both; and then I threw myself down on the pillow, and I lay there, rolling over and over and crying until I saw the daylight come into the window; both of them were really dead under the pillow. Then I took them under my arm and went down the stairs out in the vegetable garden. I took the gardener's spade and I buried them under the earth, digging as deep a

hole as I could, one here and the other one there, not together, so that they might not talk of their mother if these little dead bodies can talk. What do I know about it?

"And then, back in my bed, I felt so sick that I could not get up. They sent for the doctor and he understood it all. I'm telling you the truth, Your Honor. Do what you like with me; I'm ready."

Half of the jury were blowing their noses violently to keep from crying. The women in the courtroom were sobbing.

The president asked her:

"Where did you bury the other one?"

"The one that you have?" she asked.

"But the one . . . the one . . . the one was in the artichokes."

"Oh, the other one is among the strawberries, by the well."

And she began to sob so piteously that no one could hear her unmoved.

The girl Rosalie Prudent was acquitted.



## THE WRONG HOUSE



QUARTERMASTER VARAJOU had obtained a week's leave to visit his sister, Madame Padoie. Varajou, who was in garrison at Rennes and was leading a pretty gay life, finding himself high and dry, wrote to his sister saying that he could devote a week to her. It was not that he cared particularly for Madame Padoie, a little moralist, a devotee, and always cross; but he needed money very badly, and he remembered that of all his relations the Padoies were the only ones whom he had never approached on the subject.

Père Varajou, formerly a horticulturist at Angers but now retired from business, had closed his purse-strings to his scapegrace son and had hardly seen him for two years. His daughter had married Padoie, a former Treasury clerk, who had just been appointed tax collector at Vannes.

Varajou, on leaving the train, had some one direct him to the house of his brother-in-law, whom he found in his office arguing with the Breton peasants of the neighborhood. Padoie rose from his seat, held out his hand across the table littered with papers, murmured: "Take a chair; I shall be at liberty in a moment," sat down again, and resumed his discussion.

The peasants did not understand his explanations; the collector did not understand their line of argument. He spoke French, they spoke Breton, and the clerk who acted as interpreter appeared not to understand either.

It lasted a very long time. Varajou looked at his brother-in-law and thought: "What a fool!" Padoie must have been almost fifty. He was tall, thin, bony, slow, hairy, with heavy arched eyebrows. He wore a velvet skull cap with a gold cord. His look was gentle, like his actions. His speech, gestures, and thought were moderate. Varajou repeated to himself: "What a fool!"

He himself was one of those noisy roisterers for whom the greatest pleasures in life are the café and abandoned women. He understood nothing outside of these conditions of existence.

A boisterous braggart, filled with contempt for the rest of the world, he despised the entire universe from the height of his ignorance. When he said: "*Nom d'un chien*, what a holiday!" he expressed the highest degree of admiration of which his mind was capable.

Having finally got rid of his peasants, Padoie inquired:

"How are you?"

"Pretty well, as you see. And how are you?"

"Quite well, thank you. It is very kind of you to have thought of coming to see us."

"Oh, I have been thinking of it for some time; but you know in the military profession one has not much freedom."

"Oh, I know, I know. All the same it is very kind of you."

"And Josephine, is she well?"

"Yes, yes, thank you; you will see her presently."

"Where is she?"

"She is making some calls. We have a great many friends here; it is a very fine town."

"I thought so."

The door opened and Madame Padoie appeared. She went over to her brother without any eagerness, held out her cheek for him to kiss, and asked:

"Have you been here long?"

"No, hardly half an hour."

"Oh, I thought the train would be late. Will you come into the drawing-room?"

They went into the adjoining room, leaving Padoie to his accounts and his taxpayers. As soon as they were alone she said:

"I have heard nice things about you!"

"What have you heard?"

"It seems that you are behaving like a black-guard, getting drunk and contracting debts."

Varajou appeared very much astonished.

"I! Never in the world!"

"Oh, do not deny it; I know it."

He attempted to defend himself, but she gave him such a lecture that he could say nothing more.

She then resumed:

"We dine at six o'clock and you can amuse your-



self until then. I cannot entertain you, as I have so many things to do."

When Varajou was alone he hesitated as to whether he should sleep or take a walk. He looked first at the door leading to his room and then at the hall door, and decided to go out. He sauntered slowly through the quiet Breton town, so sleepy, so calm, so dead, on the shores of its inland lake that is called "Le Morbihan." He looked at the little gray houses, the occasional pedestrians, the empty stores, and murmured:

"Vannes is certainly not gay, not lively. It was a sad idea, my coming here."

He reached the desolate harbor, walked back along a lonely, deserted boulevard, and got home before five o'clock. Then he threw himself on his bed to sleep till dinner time.

The maid woke him, knocking at the door.

"Dinner is ready, Monsieur."

He went downstairs. In the damp dining-room, with the paper peeling from the walls near the floor, he saw a soup-tureen on a round table without any tablecloth, on which were also three melancholy soup plates.

M. and Madame Padoie entered the room at the same time as Varajou. They all sat down to table, and the husband and wife crossed themselves over the pit of their stomachs, after which Padoie helped the soup, a meat soup. It was the day for pot roast.

After the soup they had the beef, which was done to rags, melted, greasy, like pap. The officer ate slowly, with disgust, weariness, and rage.

Madame Padoie said to her husband:

"Are you going to the Judge's house this evening?"

"Yes, dear."

"Do not stay late. You always get so tired when you go out. You are not made for society, with your poor health."

She then talked about society in Vannes, of the excellent social circle in which the Padoies moved, thanks to their religious sentiments.

A *purée* of potatoes and a dish of pork were next served, in honor of the guest. Then some cheese, and that was all. No coffee.

When Varajou saw that he would have to spend the evening *tête-à-tête* with his sister, to endure her reproaches and listen to her sermons, without even a glass of liqueur to help him swallow these remonstrances, he felt that he could not stand the torture and declared that he was obliged to go to the police station to have something attended to regarding his leave of absence. And he made his escape at seven o'clock.

He had hardly reached the street before he gave himself a shake, like a dog coming out of the water. He muttered:

"Heavens! heavens! heavens! what a galley slave's life!"

He set out to look for a café, the best in the town. He found it in a public square, behind two gas lamps. Inside the café five or six men, semi-gentlemen and not noisy, were drinking and chatting quietly, leaning their elbows on the small tables, while two billiard players walked round the green baize where the balls were hitting each other as they rolled.

One heard them counting:

"Eighteen—nineteen! No luck. Oh, that's a good stroke! Well played! Eleven. You should

have played on the red. Twenty. Frozen! Frozen! Twelve. Ha! Wasn't I right? "

Varajou ordered:

"A *demi-tasse* and a small decanter of brandy, the best." Then he set down and waited for it.

He was accustomed to spending his evenings off duty with his companions amid noise and the smoke of pipes. This silence, this quiet, exasperated him. He began to drink, first the coffee, then the brandy, and asked for another decanter. He now wanted to laugh, to shout, to sing, to fight some one. He said to himself:

"Aha! I am half full. I must go and have a good time."

And he thought he would look for some girls to amuse him. He called the waiter:

"Hey, waiter! "

"Yes, Monsieur! "

"Tell me, where does one amuse one's self here? "

The man looked stupid, and replied:

"I do not know, Monsieur. Here, I suppose! "

"How do you mean, here? What do *you* call amusing one's self? "

"I do not know, Monsieur—drinking good beer or good wine."

"Ah, go away, dummy! How about the girls? "

"The girls? Ah! ah! "

"Yes, the girls, where can one find any here? "

"Girls? "

"Why, yes, girls! "

The boy approached, and, lowering his voice, said:

"You want to know where they live? "

"Why, yes, the devil! "

"You take the second street to the left and then the first to the right. It is Number Fifteen."

"Thank you, old man. There is something for you."

"Thank you, Monsieur."

And Varajou went out of the café repeating, "Second to the left, first to the right, Number Fifteen." But at the end of a few seconds he thought: "Second to the left—yes. But on leaving the café must I walk to the right or to the left? Bah! it cannot be helped; we shall see."

And he walked on, turned down the second street to the left, then the first to the right, and looked for Number Fifteen. It was a nice-looking house, and one could see behind the closed blinds that the windows were lighted on the first floor. The hall door was left partly open, and a lamp was burning in the vestibule. The non-commissioned officer thought to himself:

"This looks all right."

He went in, and as no one appeared he called:

"Hello, there, hello!"

A little maid appeared and looked astonished at seeing a soldier. He said:

"Good morning, my child. Are the ladies upstairs?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"In the parlor?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"May I go up?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"The door opposite the stairs?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

He ascended the stairs, opened a door, and saw sitting in a room, well lighted by two lamps, a chan-

delier, and two candelabras with candles in them, four ladies in evening dress apparently expecting some one.

Three of them, the younger ones, remained seated, with rather a formal air, on some crimson velvet chairs, while the fourth, who was about forty-five, was arranging some flowers in a vase. She was very stout, and wore a green silk dress with low neck and short sleeves, allowing her enormous arms and thick red neck, covered with powder, to escape as a huge flower from its corolla.

The officer saluted them, saying:

"Good evening, ladies."

The older woman turned round, appeared surprised, but bowed.

"Good evening, Monsieur."

He sat down. But, seeing that they did not welcome him eagerly, he thought that possibly only commissioned officers were admitted to the house, and this made him uneasy. But he said:

"Bah! if one comes in we can soon tell."

He then remarked:

"Are you all well?"

The large lady, no doubt the mistress of the house, replied:

"Very well, thank you!"

He could think of nothing else to say, and they were all silent. But at last, being ashamed of his bashfulness and with an awkward laugh, he said:

"Do not people have any amusement in this country? I will pay for a bottle of wine. . . ."

He had not finished his sentence when the door opened and in walked Padoie, dressed in black.

Varajou gave a shout of joy and, rising from his seat, he rushed at his brother-in-law, put his



arms round him, and waltzed him round the room, shouting:

"Here is Padoie! Here is Padoie! Here is Padoie!"

Then, letting go of the tax collector, he exclaimed as he looked him in the face:

"Oh, oh, oh, you scamp, you scamp! You are out for a good time, too. Oh, you scamp! And my sister! Are you tired of her, say?"

As he thought of all that he might gain through this unexpected situation, the forced loan, the inevitable blackmail, he flung himself on the lounge and laughed so heartily that the piece of furniture creaked all over.

The three young ladies, rising simultaneously, made their escape, while the older woman retreated to the door, looking as if she were about to faint.

And then two gentlemen appeared in evening dress and wearing the ribbons of an order. Padoie rushed up to them.

"Oh, Judge . . . he is crazy, he is crazy! He was sent to us as a convalescent. You can see that he is crazy."

Varajou was sitting up now, and not being able to understand it all, he guessed that he had committed some monstrous folly. Then he rose, and, turning to his brother-in-law, said:

"What house is this?"

But Padoie, becoming suddenly furious, stammered out:

"What house—what—what house is this? Wretch! scoundrel! villain! What house, indeed? The house of the Judge! Of the Judge of the Supreme Court—of the Supreme Court—of the Supreme Court! Oh! oh!—rascal!—rascal!—rascal!"



## THE DROWNED MAN

### I



EVERYBODY in Fécamp knew Mother Patin's story. She had certainly been unfortunate with her husband, for in his lifetime he used to beat her, just as wheat is threshed in the barn.

He was master of a fishing bark and had married her, formerly, because she was pretty, although poor.

Patin was a good sailor, but brutal; he used to frequent Father Auban's inn, where he would usually drink four or five glasses of brandy, on lucky days eight or ten glasses, and even more, according to his mood. The brandy was served to the customers by Father Auban's daughter, a pleasing brunette, who attracted people to the house only by her pretty face, for nothing had ever been gossiped about her.

Patin, when he entered the inn, would be satisfied

to look at her and to compliment her politely and respectfully. After he had had his first glass of brandy he would already find her much nicer; at the second he would wink; at the third he would say: "If you were only willing, Mam'zelle Désirée——" without ever finishing his sentence; at the fourth he would try to hold her back by her skirt in order to kiss her; and when he went as high as ten it was Father Auban who brought the remaining drinks.

The old innkeeper, who knew all the tricks of the trade, made Désirée walk about between the tables in order to increase the consumption of drinks; and Désirée, who was a worthy daughter of Father Auban, flitted around among the benches and joked with the men, her lips smiling and her eyes sparkling.

Patin got so well accustomed to Désirée's face that he thought of it even while at sea, when throwing out his nets, in storms or in calms, on moonlit or dark evenings. He thought of her while holding the tiller in the stern of his boat, while his four companions were slumbering with their heads on their arms. He always saw her, smiling, pouring out the yellow brandy with a peculiar shoulder movement, and then exclaiming as she turned away: "There, now; are you satisfied?"

He saw her so much in his mind's eye that he was overcome by an irresistible desire to marry her; and, not being able to hold out any longer, he asked for her hand.

He was rich, owned his own vessel, his nets, and a little house at the foot of the hill on the Retenue; whereas Father Auban had nothing. The marriage was therefore eagerly agreed upon and the wedding took place as soon as possible, as both parties were

desirous for the affair to be concluded as early as convenient.

Three days after the wedding Patin could no longer understand how he had ever imagined Désirée to be different from other women. What a fool he had been to incumber himself with a penniless creature, who had undoubtedly inveigled him with some drug which she had put in his brandy!

He would curse all day long, break his pipe with his teeth, and maul his crew; after he had used all known terms against everything that came his way, he would rid himself of his remaining anger on the fish and lobsters, which he pulled from the nets and threw into the live cars, accompanying them with curses and threats. When he returned home he would find his wife, Father Auban's daughter, within reach of his mouth and hand, and it was not a long time before he treated her like the lowest creature in the world. As she listened calmly, accustomed to paternal violence, he grew exasperated at her quiet, and one evening he beat her. Then life at his home became unbearable.

For ten years the principal topic of conversation on the Retenue was about the beatings that Patin gave his wife and his manner of cursing at her for the least thing. He could, indeed, curse with a richness of vocabulary in a roundness of tone unequaled by any other man in Fécamp. As soon as his ship was sighted at the entrance of the harbor, returning from the fishing expedition, every one awaited the first volley he would hurl from the bridge as soon as he perceived his wife's white cap.

Standing near the stern, he would keep his eye fixed on the bow and on the sail, and, notwithstanding the difficulty of the narrow passage and the

height of the turbulent waves, he would search among the watching women and try to recognize his wife, Father Auban's daughter, the wretch!

Then, as soon as he had seen her, notwithstanding the noise of the wind and waves, he would let loose upon her with such power and volubility that every one would laugh, although they pitied her greatly. When he arrived at the dock he would relieve his mind, while unloading the fish, in such an expressive manner that he attracted around him all the loafers of the neighborhood. The words left his mouth sometimes like shots from a cannon, short and terrible, sometimes like peals of thunder, which roll and rumble for five minutes, such a hurricane of oaths that he seemed to have in his lungs one of the storms of the Eternal Father.

When he left his ship and found himself face to face with her, surrounded by all the gossips of the neighborhood, he would bring up a new cargo of insults, and bring her back to their dwelling, she in front, he behind, she weeping, he shrieking.

At last, when alone with her behind closed doors, he would thrash her on the slightest pretext. The slightest thing was sufficient to make him raise his hand, and when he had once begun he did not stop, but he would throw into her face the true motive for his anger. At each blow he would shriek: "There, you beggar! There, you wretch! There, you pauper! What a bright thing I did when I rinsed my mouth with your rascal of a father's apology for brandy!"

The poor woman lived in continual fear, in a ceaseless trembling of body and soul, in everlasting expectation of outrageous thrashings.

This lasted ten years. She was so timorous that



she would grow pale whenever she spoke to any one, and she thought of nothing but the blows with which she was threatened; and she became thinner, more yellow, and drier than a smoked fish.

## II

One night, when her husband was at sea, she was suddenly awakened by the wild roaring of the wind! She sat up in her bed, trembling, but, as she heard nothing more, she lay down again; almost immediately there was a roar in the chimney which shook the entire house; it seemed to cross the heavens like a pack of furious animals snorting and roaring.

Then she arose and rushed to the harbor. Other women were arriving from all sides, carrying lanterns. The men also were gathering, and all were watching the foaming crests of the breaking waves.

The storm lasted fifteen hours. Eleven sailors never returned; Patin was among them.

In the neighborhood of Dieppe the wreck of his bark, the *Jeune-Amélie*, was found. The bodies of his sailors were found near Saint-Valéry, but his never was discovered. As his vessel seemed to have been cut in two, his wife expected and feared his return for a long time; for if there had been a collision he alone might have been picked up and carried afar off.

Little by little she grew accustomed to the thought that she was rid of him, although she would start every time that a neighbor, a beggar, or a peddler would enter suddenly.

One afternoon, about four years after the disappearance of her husband, while she was walking along the Rue aux Juifs, she stopped before the

house of an old sea captain who had recently died, and whose furniture was for sale. Just at that moment a parrot was at auction; he had green feathers and a blue head, and was watching everybody with a displeased look. "Three francs!" cried the auctioneer. "A bird that can talk like a lawyer, three francs!"

A friend of the Patin woman nudged her and said: "You ought to buy that, you who are rich. It would be good company for you; that bird is worth more than thirty francs. Anyhow, you can always sell it for twenty or twenty-five!"

Patin's widow added fifty centimes, and the bird was given her in a little cage, which she carried away. She took it home, and, as she was opening the wire door in order to give it something to drink, she received a cut on her finger which opened the skin and drew blood.

"Oh, how naughty he is!" she said.

Nevertheless, she gave it some hemp-seed and maize and watched it smooth out its plumes in the new home with its new mistress.

On the following morning, just as day was breaking, the Patin woman distinctly heard a loud, deep, roaring voice calling: "Are you going to get up, carrion?"

Her fear was so great that she hid her head under the sheets, for when Patin was with her as soon as he would open his eyes he would shout those well-known words into her ears.

Trembling, rolled into a ball, her back prepared for the thrashing which she already expected, her face buried in the pillows, she murmured: "Good Lord! He is here! Good Lord! He is here! Good Lord! He has come back!"

Minutes passed; no noise disturbed the quiet room. Then, trembling, she stuck her head out of the bed, sure that he was there, watching, ready to beat her. Except for a ray of sun shining through the window, she saw nothing, and she said to herself: "He must be hidden."

She waited a long time, and then, when she grew a little more assured, she said to herself: "I must have dreamed it, seeing that there is nobody here."

A little reassured, she closed her eyes, when from quite near a furious voice, the thunderous voice of the drowned man, could be heard crying: "Say! when in the name of all that's holy are you going to get up, you b——?"

She jumped out of bed, moved by obedience, by the obedient passion of a woman accustomed to blows, and who still remembers and always will remember that voice! She said: "Here I am, Patin; what do you want?"

But Patin did not answer. Then, at a complete loss, she looked about herself, and at last she slipped down into a chair, wild with anxiety, convinced that Patin's soul, alone, was near there, near her, and that he had returned in order to torture her.

Suddenly she remembered the loft, in order to reach which one had to take a ladder. Surely he must have hidden there in order to surprise her. He must have been held by savages, on some distant shore, unable to escape them until now, and he had returned, worse than ever. There was no doubting the quality of that voice. She raised her head and asked: "Are you up there, Patin?"

Patin did not answer. Then, with a terrible fear which made her heart tremble, she climbed the ladder, opened the skylight, looked, saw nothing, en-

tered, looked about, and found nothing. Sitting on some straw, she began to cry; but while she was weeping, overcome by a poignant and supernatural terror, she heard Patin talking in the room below. He seemed less angry, and he was saying: "Nasty weather! Fierce wind! Nasty weather! I haven't eaten, zounds!"

She cried through the ceiling: "Here I am, Patin; I am getting your meal ready. Don't get angry."

She ran down again. There was no one in the room. She felt herself growing weak, as if death were touching her, and she tried to run and get help from the neighbors, when a voice near her cried out: "I haven't had my breakfast, by G——!"

And the parrot in his cage watched her with his round, mean, bad eye. She, too, looked at him wildly, murmuring: "Ah! So it's you!"

He shook his head and continued: "Just you wait! I'll teach you how to loaf."

What happened within her? She felt, she understood that it was he, the Dead Man, who was returning, who had hidden in the feathers of this bird in order to continue to torment her; that he would curse, as formerly, all day long, and bite and swear at her, in order to attract the neighbors and make them laugh. Then she rushed for the cage and seized the bird, which scratched and tore her flesh with its claws and beak. But she held it with all her strength between her hands; she threw it on the ground and rolled over it with the frenzy of one possessed. She crushed it, and finally made of it nothing but a little green, flabby lump which no longer moved or spoke. Then she wrapped it in a cloth, as in a shroud, and she went out in her night-

gown, barefoot; she crossed the dock, against which the choppy waves of the sea were beating, and she shook the cloth and let drop this little dead thing, which looked like so much grass. Then she returned, threw herself on her knees before the empty cage, and, overcome by what she had done, kneeled and prayed for forgiveness, as if she had committed some heinous crime.





## THE CRIPPLE



THE following adventure happened to me about 1882. I had just taken the train and settled down in a corner, hoping that I should be left alone, when the door suddenly opened again and I heard a voice say: "Take care, Monsieur, we are just at a crossing; the step is very high."

Another voice answered: "That's all right, Laurent, I have a firm hold on the handle."

Then a head appeared, and two hands seized the leather straps hanging on either side of the door and slowly pulled up an enormous body, whose feet striking on the step sounded like two canes. When the man had hoisted his torso into the compartment I noticed, at the loose edge of his trousers, the end of a wooden leg, which was soon followed by its mate. A head appeared behind this traveler and asked: "Are you all right, Monsieur?"

"Yes, my boy."

"Then here are your packages and crutches."

And a servant, who looked like an old soldier, climbed up, carrying in his arms a stack of bundles wrapped in black and yellow papers and carefully tied; he placed one after the other in the net over his master's head. Then he said: "There, Monsieur, that is all. There are five of them—the candy, the doll, the drum, the gun, and the *pâté de foies gras*."

"Very well, my boy. Thank you, Laurent; good health!"

The man closed the door and walked away, and I looked at my neighbor. He was about thirty-five, although his hair was almost white; he wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor; he had a heavy mustache and was quite stout, with the stoutness of a strong and active man who is kept motionless on account of some infirmity. He wiped his brow, sighed, and, looking me full in the face, he asked: "Does smoking annoy you, Monsieur?"

"No, Monsieur."

Surely I knew that eye, that voice, that face. But when and where had I seen them? I had certainly met that man, spoken to him, shaken his hand. That was a long, long time ago. It was lost in the haze wherein the mind seems to feel around blindly for memories and pursues them like fleeing phantoms without being able to seize them. He, too, was observing me, staring me out of countenance with the tenacity of a man who remembers slightly but not completely. Our eyes, embarrassed by this persistent contact, turned away; then, after a few minutes, drawn together again by the obscure and tenacious will of working memory, they met once more, and I said: "Monsieur, instead of staring

at each other for an hour or so would it not be better to try to discover where we have known each other? ”

My neighbor answered graciously: “ You are quite right, Monsieur.”

He hesitated for a few minutes; then, with the I named myself: “ I am Henri Bonclair. vague look and voice which accompany great mental tension, he said: “ Oh, I remember perfectly. I met you twelve years ago, before the war, at the Poincels! ”

“ Yes, Monsieur. . . . Ah! . . . Ah! . . . You are Lieutenant Revalière? ”

“ Yes . . . I was even Captain Revalière up to the time when I lost my feet . . . both of them together from one cannon ball.”

Now that we knew each other's identity we looked at each other again. I remembered perfectly the handsome, slender youth who led the cotillons with such frenzied agility and gracefulness that he had been nicknamed “ the fury.” Going back into the dim, distant past, I recalled a story which I had heard and forgotten, one of those stories to which one listens but forgets, and which leave but a faint impression upon the memory.

There was something about love in it. Little by little the shadows cleared up, and the face of a young girl appeared before my eyes. Then her name struck me with the force of an explosion: Made-moiselle de Mandel. I remembered everything now. It was indeed a love story, but quite commonplace. The young girl loved this young man, and when I had met them there was already talk of the approaching wedding. The youth seemed to be very much in love, very happy.

I raised my eye to the net, where all the packages which had been brought in by the servant were trembling from the motion of the train, and the voice of the servant came back to me, as if he had just finished speaking. He had said: "There, Monsieur, that is all. There are five of them: the candy, the doll, the drum, the gun, and the *pâté de foies gras*."

Then, in a second, a whole romance unfolded itself in my head. It was like all those which I had already read, where the young lady married notwithstanding the catastrophe, whether corporal or financial; therefore, this officer who had been maimed in the war had returned, after the campaign, to the young girl who had given him her promise, and she had kept her word.

I considered that very beautiful, but simple, just as one considers simple all devotions and climaxes in books or in plays. It always seems, when one reads or listens to these stories of magnanimity, that one could sacrifice one's self with enthusiastic pleasure and overwhelming joy. But the following day, when an unfortunate friend comes to borrow some money, there is a strange revulsion of feeling.

But suddenly another supposition, less poetic and more realistic, replaced the first one. Perhaps he had married before the war, before this frightful accident, and she, in despair and resignation, had been forced to receive, care for, cheer, and support this husband, who had left a handsome man and had returned without his feet, a frightful wreck, forced into immobility, powerless anger, and fatal obesity.

Was he happy or in torture? I was seized with an irresistible desire to know his story, or, at least, the principal points, which would permit me to guess

that which he could not or would not tell me. Still thinking the matter over, I began talking to him. We had exchanged a few commonplace words; and I raised my eyes to the net, and thought: "He must have three children: the bonbons are for his wife, the doll for his little girl, the drum and the gun for his sons, and this *pâté de foies gras* for himself."

Suddenly I asked him: "Are you a father, Monsieur?"

He answered: "No, Monsieur."

I suddenly felt confused, as if I had been guilty of some breach of etiquette, and I continued: "I beg your pardon. I had thought that you were when I heard your servant speaking about the toys. One listens and draws conclusions unconsciously."

He smiled and then murmured: "No, I am not even married. I am still at the preliminary stage."

I pretended suddenly to remember, and said: "Oh! that's true! When I knew you, you were engaged to Mademoiselle de Mandel, I believe."

"Yes, Monsieur, your memory is excellent."

I grew very bold and added: "I also seem to remember hearing that Mademoiselle de Mandel married Monsieur—Monsieur——"

He calmly mentioned the name: "Monsieur de Fleurel."

"Yes, that's it! I remember it was on that occasion that I heard of your wound."

I looked him full in the face, and he blushed. His full face, which was already red from the oversupply of blood, turned crimson. He answered quickly, with a sudden ardor of a man who is pleading a cause which is lost in his mind and in his heart, but which he does not wish to admit:



"It is wrong, Monsieur, to couple my name with that of Madame de Fleurel. When I returned from the war . . . without my feet, alas! I never would have permitted her to become my wife. Was it possible? When one marries, Monsieur, it is not in order to parade one's generosity: it is in order to live every day, every hour, every minute, every second beside a man; and if this man is disfigured, as I am, it is a death sentence to marry him! Oh, I understand, I admire all sacrifices and devotions when they have a limit, but I do not admit that a woman should give up her whole life, all joy, all her dreams, in order to satisfy the admiration of the gallery. When I hear, on the floor of my room, the tapping of my wooden legs and of my crutches, I grow angry enough to strangle my servant. Do you think that I would permit a woman to do what I myself am unable to tolerate? And, then, do you think that my stumps are pretty? "

He was silent. What could I say? He certainly was right. Could I blame her, hold her in contempt, even say that she was wrong? No. However, the end which conformed to the rule, to the truth, did not satisfy my poetic appetite. These heroic deeds demand a beautiful sacrifice, which seemed to be lacking, and I felt a certain disappointment. I suddenly asked: "Has Madame de Fleurel any children? "

"Yes, one girl and two boys. It is for them that I am bringing these toys. She and her husband are very kind to me."

The train was going up the incline to Saint-Germain. It passed through the tunnels, entered the station, and stopped. I was about to offer my arm to the wounded officer, in order to help him descend,

when two hands were stretched up to him through the open door.

"Hello! my dear Revalière!"

"Ah! Hello, Fleurel!"

Standing behind the man, the woman, still beautiful, was smiling and waving her hands to him. A little girl, standing beside her, was jumping for joy, and two young boys were eagerly watching the drum and the gun, which were passing from the car into their father's hands.

When the cripple was on the ground, all the children kissed him. Then they set off, the little girl holding in her hand the small varnished rung of a crutch, just as she might walk beside her big friend and hold his thumb.



## THAT COSTLY RIDE



HE household lived frugally on the meager income derived from the husband's insignificant appointments. Two children had been born of the marriage, and the earlier condition of the strictest economy had become one of quiet, concealed, shamefaced misery; the poverty of a noble family which in spite of misfortune never forgets its rank.

Hector de Gribelin had been educated in the provinces, under the paternal roof, by an aged priest. His people were not rich, but they managed somehow to live and to keep up appearances.

At twenty years of age they tried to find him a position, and he entered the Ministry of Marine as a clerk at sixty pounds a year. He foundered on the rock of life like all those who have not been early prepared for its rude struggles, who look at life through a mist, who do not know how to pro-

tect themselves, whose special aptitudes and faculties have not been developed from childhood, whose early training has not developed the rough energy needed for the battle of life or furnished them with tool or weapon.

His first three years of office work were a martyrdom.

He had, however, renewed the acquaintance of a few friends of his family—elderly people, far behind the times, and poor like himself, who lived in aristocratic streets, the gloomy thoroughfares of the Faubourg Saint-Germain; and he had created a social circle for himself.

Strangers to modern life, humble yet proud, these needy aristocrats lived in the upper stories of sleepy, old-world houses. From top to bottom of their dwellings the tenants were titled, but money seemed just as scarce on the ground floor as in the attics.

Their eternal prejudices, absorption in their rank, anxiety lest they should lose caste, filled the minds and thoughts of these families once so brilliant, now ruined by the idleness of the men of the family. Hector de Gribelin met in this circle a young girl as well born and as poor as himself, and married her.

They had two children in four years.

For four years more the husband and wife, harassed by poverty, knew no other distraction than the Sunday walk in the Champs-Élysées, and a few evenings at the theater (amounting in all to one or two in the course of the winter) which they owed to free passes presented by some comrade or other.

But in the spring of the following year some overtime work was intrusted to Hector de Gribelin

by his chief, for which he received the large sum of three hundred francs.

The day he brought the money home he said to his wife:

"My dear Henrietta, we must indulge in some sort of festivity—say an outing for the children."

And after a long discussion it was decided that they should go and lunch one day in the country.

"Well," cried Hector, "once will not break us, as we'll hire a wagonette for you, the children, and the maid. And I'll have a saddle horse; the exercise will do me good."

The whole week long they talked of nothing but the projected excursion.

Every evening, on his return from the office, Hector caught up his elder son, put him astride his leg, and, making him bounce up and down as hard as he could, said:

"That's how daddy will gallop next Sunday."

And the youngster amused himself all day long by bestriding chairs, dragging them round the room, and shouting:

"This is daddy on horseback!"

The servant herself gazed at her master with awestruck eyes, as she thought of him riding alongside the carriage, and at meal-times she listened with all her ears while he spoke of riding, and recounted the exploits of his youth, when he lived at home with his father. Oh, he had learned in a good school, and once he felt his steed between his legs he feared nothing—nothing whatever!

Rubbing his hands, he repeated gayly to his wife:

"If only they would give me a restive animal I should be all the better pleased. You'll see how well I can ride; and if you like we'll come back by



the Champs-Élysées just as all the people are returning from the Bois. As we shall make a good appearance I shouldn't at all object to meeting some one from the Ministry. That is all that is necessary to insure the respect of one's chiefs."

On the day appointed the carriage and the riding horse arrived at the same moment before the door. Hector went down immediately to examine his mount. He had had straps sewn to his trousers, and flourished in his hand a whip he had bought the evening before.

He raised the horse's legs and felt them one after another, passed his hand over the animal's neck, flank, and hocks, opened his mouth, examined his teeth, declared his age; and then, the whole household having collected round him, he delivered a discourse on the horse in general and the specimen before him in particular, pronouncing the latter excellent in every respect.

When the rest of the party had taken their seats in the carriage he examined the saddle-girths; then, putting his foot in the stirrup, he sprang to the saddle. The animal began to curvet and nearly threw his rider.

Hector, not altogether at his ease, tried to soothe him:

"Come, come, good horse, gently now!"

Then, when the horse had recovered his equanimity, and the rider his nerve, the latter asked:

"Are you ready?"

The occupants of the carriage replied with one voice:

"Yes."

"Forward!" he commanded.

And the cavalcade set out.

All looks were centered on him. He trotted in the English style, rising unnecessarily high in the saddle, looking at times as if he were mounting into space. Sometimes he seemed on the point of falling forward on the horse's mane; his eyes were fixed, his face drawn, his cheeks pale.

His wife, holding one of the children on her knees, and the servant, who was carrying the other, continually cried out:

"Look at papa! Look at papa!"

And the two boys, intoxicated by the motion of the carriage, by their delight, and by the keen air, uttered shrill cries. The horse, frightened by the noise they made, started off at a gallop, and while Hector was trying to control his steed his hat fell off, and the driver had to get down and pick it up. When the equestrian had recovered it he called to his wife from a distance:

"Don't let the children shout like that! They'll make the horse bolt!"

They lunched on the grass in the Vésinet woods, having brought provisions with them in the carriage.

Although the driver was looking after the three horses, Hector rose every minute to see if his own lacked anything; he patted him on the neck, and fed him with bread, cakes, and sugar.

"He's an unequal trotter," he declared. "He certainly shook me up a little at first, but, as you saw, I soon got used to it; he knows his master now, and won't give any more trouble."

As had been decided, they returned by the Champs-Élysées.

That spacious thoroughfare literally swarmed with vehicles of every kind, and on the sidewalks the pedestrians were so numerous that they looked

like two interminable black ribbons unfurling their length from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place de la Concorde. A flood of sunlight played on this gay scene, making the varnish of the carriages, the steel of the harness, and the handles of the carriage doors shine with dazzling brilliancy.

An intoxication of life and motion seemed to have invaded this assemblage of human beings, carriages, and horses. In the distance the outlines of the Obelisk could be discerned in a cloud of golden vapor.

As soon as Hector's horse had passed the Arc de Triomphe he became suddenly imbued with fresh energy, and, realizing that his stable was not far off, began to trot rapidly through the maze of wheels, despite all his rider's efforts to restrain him.

The carriage was now far behind. When the horse arrived opposite the Palais de l'Industrie he saw a clear field before him, and, turning to the right, set off at a gallop.

An old woman wearing an apron was crossing the road in leisurely fashion; she happened to be just in Hector's way as he arrived on the scene riding at full speed. Powerless to control his mount, he shouted at the top of his voice:

"Hi! Look out there! Hi!"

She must have been deaf, for she continued peacefully on her way, until the awful moment when, struck by the horse's chest as by a locomotive under full steam, she rolled ten paces off, turning three somersaults on the way.

Voices yelled:

"Stop him!"

Hector, frantic with terror, clung to the horse's mane, and shouted:

"Help! Help!"

A terrible jolt hurled him, as if shot from a gun, over his horse's ears, and cast him into the arms of a policeman who was running up to stop him.

In the space of a second a furious, gesticulating, vociferating group had gathered round him. An old gentleman with a white mustache, wearing a large round decoration, seemed particularly exasperated. He repeated:

"Confound it! When a man is as awkward as all that he should remain at home, and not come killing people in the streets, if he doesn't know how to handle a horse."

Four men arrived on the scene, carrying the old woman. She appeared to be dead. Her skin was like parchment, her cap on one side, and she was covered with dust.

"Take her to a druggist's," ordered the old gentleman, "and let us go to the commissary of police."

Hector started on his way with a policeman on either side of him; a third was leading his horse. A crowd followed them—and suddenly the wagonette appeared in sight. His wife alighted in consternation, the servant lost her head, the children whimpered. He explained that he would soon be at home, that he had knocked a woman down, and that there was not much the matter. And his family, distracted with anxiety, went on their way.

When they arrived before the commissary the explanation took place in few words. He gave his name—Hector de Gribelin, employed at the Ministry of Marine; and then they awaited news of the injured woman. A policeman who had been sent to obtain information returned saying that she had recovered consciousness, but was complaining of

frightful internal pain. She was a charwoman, sixty-five years of age, named Madame Simon.

When he heard that she was not dead Hector regained hope, and promised to defray her doctor's bill. Then he hastened to the druggist's. The doorway was thronged; the injured woman, huddled in an armchair, was groaning. Her arms hung at her sides, her face was drawn. Two doctors were still engaged in examining her. No bones were broken, but they feared some internal lesion.

Hector addressed her:

"Do you suffer much?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Where is the pain?"

"I feel as if my stomach were on fire."

A doctor approached.

"Are you the gentleman who caused the accident?"

"I am."

"This woman ought to be sent to a home. I know one where they would take her at five shillings a day. Would you like me to send her there?"

Hector was delighted at the idea, thanked him, and returned home much relieved.

His wife, dissolved in tears, was awaiting him; he reassured her.

"It's all right. This Madame Simon is better already, and will be quite well in two or three days; I have sent her to a home. It's all right."

When he left his office the next day he went to inquire for Madame Simon. He found her eating rich soup with an air of great satisfaction.

"Well?" said he.

"Oh, sir," she replied, "I'm just the same. I feel sort of crushed—not a bit better."



The doctor declared they must wait and see; some complication or other might arise.

Hector waited three days, then he returned. The old woman, fresh-faced and clear-eyed, began to whine when she saw him:

"I can't move, sir; I can't move a bit. I shall be like this for the rest of my days."

A shudder passed through Hector's frame. He asked for the doctor, who merely shrugged his shoulders, and said:

"What can I do? I can't tell what's wrong with her. She shrieks when they try to raise her. They can't even move her chair from one place to another without her uttering the most distressing cries. I am bound to believe what she tells me; I can't look into her inside. So long as I have no chance of seeing her walk I am not justified in supposing her to be telling lies about herself."

The old woman listened, motionless, a malicious gleam in her eyes.

A week passed, then a fortnight, then a month. Madame Simon did not leave her armchair. She ate from morning to night, grew fat, chatted gayly with the other patients, and seemed to enjoy her immobility as if it were the rest to which she was entitled after fifty years of going up and down stairs, of turning mattresses, of carrying coal from one story to another, of sweeping and dusting.

Hector, at his wits' end, came to see her every day; every day he found her calm and serene, declaring:

"I can't move, sir; I shall never be able to move again."

Every evening Madame de Gribelin, devoured with anxiety, asked:

"How is Madame Simon?"

And every time he replied with a resignation born of despair:

"Just the same; no change whatever."

They dismissed the servant, whose wages they could no longer afford. They economized more rigidly than ever. The whole of the extra pay had been swallowed up.

Then Hector summoned four noted doctors, who met in consultation over the old woman. She let them examine her, feel her, sound her, watching them the while with a cunning eye.

"We must make her walk," said one.

"But, sirs, I can't!" she cried. "I can't move!"

Then they took hold of her, raised her, and dragged her a short distance; but she slipped from their grasp and fell to the floor, groaning and giving vent to such heartrending cries that they carried her back to her seat with infinite care and precaution.

They pronounced a guarded opinion—agreeing, however, that work was an impossibility to her.

And when Hector brought this news to his wife she sank on a chair, murmuring:

"It would be better to bring her here; it would cost us less."

He started in amazement.

"Here? In our own house? How can you think of such a thing?"

But she, resigned now to anything, replied, with tears in her eyes:

"But what can we do, my love? It's not my fault!"



## A MEMORY



OW many youthful memories return to me under the influence of the first spring sun! There is an age where everything is good, gay, charming, intoxicating. How exquisite are these memories of past springs!

Old friends, do you remember those happy years when life was nothing but one long triumph and laugh? Do you remember the days when we wandered about Paris in radiant poverty; our walks through the budding woods, our joy at the sight of the blue air, and our adventures of love, so commonplace and yet so delicious?

I wish to tell you one of these adventures. It happened to me twelve years ago, and yet it already seems to me so old, as if it were at the other end of my life, before that ugly turning from which I began to see the end of the journey.

I was then twenty-five. I had just arrived in

Paris; I was employed at a ministry, and Sundays appeared to me like extraordinary holidays, full of an exuberant happiness, although nothing wonderful ever happened.

Now every day is Sunday. But I regret the time when I only had one a week. How pleasant it was! I had six francs to spend!

I woke up early that morning with the sensation of freedom which the clerks so well know, that feeling of delivery, of rest, of freedom, of independence.

I opened my window. The weather was glorious. The blue sky spread over the city, full of sunlight and of swallows. I dressed quickly and left, wishing to spend the day in the woods, to smell the leaves; for I come from the country, and I have been brought up on the grass and under the trees.

Paris was awakening joyfully in the warmth and the sunlight. The houses looked bright, the canaries were singing in their cages, and joy filled the streets, lighted up the places, gave every one a smile like a mysterious happiness under the bright rising sun.

I went to the Seine to take a boat that would carry me to Saint-Cloud. How I liked to wait for the boat at the little landing! I felt as if I were leaving for the end of the world, for new and marvelous countries. I saw the boat appear far off in the distance, under the arch of the second bridge, looking small at first and then growing larger and larger; and in my mind it took the proportion of an ocean greyhound. It docked, and I went on board.

Everywhere were people dressed in their Sunday clothes, the women wearing flashy gowns and gaudy ribbons. I stood far up in the bow, and watched the streets, the houses, and the bridges pass by. Suddenly I saw the great viaduct of Point-du-Jour

across the river. This was the end of Paris and the beginning of the country; the Seine suddenly broadened out as if it had received space and liberty, and became the beautiful quiet river which flows through the plains, at the foot of wooded hills, between fields, and at the edge of forests.

Soon the boat passed between two islands and followed a wooded hill dotted with little white houses. A voice called out: "Bas-Mendon," then, farther on: "Sèvres," and lastly: "Saint-Cloud."

I left the boat and followed along the road which goes through the town and into the woods. I had taken with me a map of the suburbs of Paris in order not to lose myself in the walks which run in every direction across the forest where the Parisians take their outings.

As soon as I was in the shade I looked up my prospective route, which seemed to me perfectly simple. I would go to the right, then to the left, then turn again to the left, and I should reach Versailles by nightfall, in time for dinner. I began to walk along slowly under the trees, drinking in the sweet air perfumed by the buds and blossoming flowers. I was walking along slowly, forgetful of the office, the chief, my colleagues and files, and I was thinking happy things, which could not help happening to me, of all the unknown which is veiled by the future. I remembered a thousand memories of my childhood, awakened by the sweet, living, pulsating charm of the woods warmed by this large June sun.

At times I sat down by the road to look at the countless little flowers whose names I so well know. I recognized them as if they were the very ones I saw at the old home. They were yellow, red, purple, dainty, blossoming on slender stems, or against the



ground. Insects of every color and shape, wonderfully made, terrible and tiny monsters, were wending their troubled way up the slender blades of grass, which bent under their weight.

Then I slept in the open air for a few hours, and I started out again rested and strengthened by this nap. In front of me opened up a delightful little alley, whose thin foliage allowed little beams of sunlight to strike the earth and light up the dainty daisies hidden in the grass. It stretched out endlessly in the distance, deserted and calm. A solitary bumble-bee buzzed around, stopping on a flower and then flying off again, soon to stop on another. His enormous body seemed to be made of brown velvet, streaked with yellow and supported by transparent wings which appeared to be absurdly small.

Suddenly, in the distance, I noticed two persons coming toward me, a man and a woman. Annoyed at being disturbed in my quiet stroll, I was about to disappear into the woods when I thought I heard some one calling me. The woman was indeed waving her parasol, and the man, in his shirt-sleeves and with his coat over one arm, was waving the other as a signal of distress.

I went toward them. Both of them were very red in the face; they were walking very rapidly, she with little short steps, he with long strides.

Their faces wore an expression of ill humor and fatigue. The woman immediately asked me: "Monsieur, could you tell me where we are? My fool of a husband has lost us by pretending to know the country perfectly."

I answered with assurance: "Madame, you are going toward Saint-Cloud, and you are turning your backs toward Versailles."

She continued, with a look of irritated pity for her husband: "What! we are turning our backs to Versailles? Why, that's just where we wanted to take dinner."

"I, too, Madame, am going there."

She shrugged her shoulders and exclaimed several times: "Gracious! gracious!" with the tone of supreme contempt that women use in order to express their exasperation.

She was quite young and pretty, with a faint little down on her upper lip.

As for him, he was wiping his forehead, on which beads of perspiration were standing out. They were undoubtedly a couple of little Parisian shopkeepers. The man seemed dumfounded, worn out, and in despair. He muttered: "But, my dear, it's you who——"

She did not let him finish, exclaiming: "So it's I!—it's I now! Was it I who wished to leave without any information, and who said that I could always find myself? Was it I who wished to go to the right, pretending that I remembered the road? Was it I who took care of Cacaou?"

She had not finished talking when her husband, as if seized by an attack of madness, let out a shrill cry, which can be described in no language, but which sounded something like "t-i-i-i-t-i-i-i-t." The young woman seemed neither surprised nor disturbed, and she continued: "Really, some people are too stupid; they think they know everything. Tell me, was it I who took the train for Dieppe last year, instead of going to Havre? Was it I who bet that Monsieur Letourneur lived in the Rue des Martyrs? Was it I who did not wish to believe that Céleste was a thief?"

And she continued furiously, with a surprising rapidity of speech, heaping on him the strangest, most unexpected accusations, furnished by all the intimate situations of common life, reproaching her husband with his every act, idea, attempt, effort, from the day they had been married. He tried to stop her, to calm her, and stammered: "But, my dear—this is useless—before Monsieur—we are making a sight of ourselves. This does not interest Monsieur in the least."

And he turned two mournful eyes toward the bushes, as if trying to pierce them with a glance; and from time to time he again let out this prolonged, shrill "t-i-i-i-t-i-i-i-t." I imagined that this habit might be some nervous affliction.

Suddenly the young woman turned to me, and, changing her tone of voice with surprising rapidity, she said: "If Monsieur does not object we might walk along with him, so as not to lose ourselves again and run the risk of sleeping in the woods." I bowed; she took my arm and began to talk of everything, of herself, her life, her family, her business. They were glovers in the Rue Saint-Lazare. Her husband was walking beside her, looking among the trees and calling "t-i-i-i-t-i-i-i-t" from time to time.

At last I asked him: "Why do you yell like that?"

He answered with a dazed and despairing look: "I have lost my poor dog."

"What! You have lost your dog?"

"Yes. He was hardly a year old, and he had never been out of the shop. I wanted to take him for a walk in the woods. He never had seen grass nor leaves and he almost went wild. He began to

run around and bark as though he were mad; then he disappeared in the forest. I should also add that he grew terribly frightened near the railroad; maybe that affected him. No matter how I called, he didn't come back. He will starve in there."

The young woman, without turning toward her husband, exclaimed: "If you had kept him on his leash, that wouldn't have happened. When one is such a fool as you, he doesn't need a dog."

He muttered timidly: "But, my dear, it is you——"

She stopped short and looked him in the eyes as if she wished to scratch them out; and she again heaped countless reproaches on him.

Night was falling. The veil of mist which covers the country at dusk was slowly unfolding. Everywhere was romance, caused by that peculiar and charming sensation of freshness which fills the woods at the approach of dusk.

Suddenly the young man stopped, felt his pockets feverishly, and exclaimed: "Oh! I believe I——"

She looked at him and asked: "Well, what's the matter now?"

"I forgot that I had my coat over my arm."

"Well?"

"I have lost my pocketbook . . . all my money is in it."

She was trembling with anger and choked with indignation; she cried: "Well, that's the last straw! What a fool you are! What a fool! How could I ever have married such an idiot? Well, go look for it, and take care that you find it. I am going to Versailles with Monsieur. I have no desire to sleep in the woods."

He answered gently: "Yes, my dear. Where shall I find you?"

I had been recommended to a restaurant. I mentioned that as the meeting place. The husband turned around and scanned the ground with an eager eye, calling all the time: "t-i-i-i-t-i-i-i-t." He was a long time disappearing. Soon we could distinguish the outlines of his body; but for a long time we heard his mournful "t-i-i-i-t t-i-i-i-t, t-i-i-i-t t-i-i-i-t," growing sharper as the night grew thicker.

I was walking along briskly, happy in the sweetness of dusk, with this unknown little woman leaning on my arm. I searched in vain for the proper words to say. I remained silent, troubled, delighted.

Suddenly a highway crossed our alley. I noticed a whole town to our right, in a little valley. Where could we be? A man was passing by. I questioned him, and he answered: "Bougival."

I asked in bewilderment: "What? Bougival? Are you sure?"

"I ought to be. I live here!"

The little woman burst out laughing. I proposed taking a carriage to Versailles; but she answered: "No. Really, this is too funny, and I am too hungry. I am not in the least disturbed. My husband will be able to find himself. It's just so much gain to me to be rid of him for a few hours."

We went to a restaurant on the edge of the water, and I dared to take a private room.

Under the influence of champagne she grew very gay, sang, and did all kinds of imprudent things—even the most imprudent.

This was my first adventure in love.





## A NIGHT IN SPRING



IT was settled that Jeanne was to marry her cousin, Jacques, whom she had known from infancy. They had grown up together without knowing that they loved each other. The young girl was coquettish but innocent in her manner toward him, and when she saw him, kissed him heartily and naturally without any special emotion.

As for him, he thought, quite simply: "She is dainty, my little cousin;" and he regarded her with that sort of instinctive tenderness which a man always feels for a pretty girl. His reflections did not go farther.

One day Jeanne chanced to hear her mother saying to her aunt (her Aunt Alberte, for Aunt Lison had remained unmarried):

"I assure you they will love one another at

once, these young people; you will see. As for me, Jacques is exactly the son-in-law I dream of."

And, immediately, Jeanne began to adore her Cousin Jacques. Then she blushed when she saw him; her hand trembled in that of the young man; she cast down her eyes; then she met his glance, and she made modest advances, so as to encourage him to kiss her, and he saw clearly her feelings toward him. He understood, and, in a transport which had in it as much gratified vanity as genuine affection, he clasped his cousin in his arms, whispering in her ear: "I love you! I love you!"

From that time there was nothing between them but billing and cooing, lovemaking that was rendered easy and natural by their past associations. In the drawing-room Jacques kissed his intended bride in the presence of the three old women, the three sisters, his mother, Jeanne's mother, and Aunt Lison. He often walked out alone with her the whole day in the woods, along the river's bank, through the damp meadows, where the grass was starred with wild flowers. And they looked forward to the day fixed for their marriage without any great impatience, but enveloped, bathed in an exquisite sense of happiness, tasting the unspeakable delight of tender caresses, clinging hand-clasps, impassioned glances, so intense that their very souls seemed to mingle, and vaguely oppressed by a longing as yet undefined, feeling a sort of restlessness on their lips, which called to each other, seeming to watch and wait for each other, and to give promise of future bliss.

Sometimes, when they spent the entire day in these platonic exchanges of tenderness, they felt as night came on a sense of exhaustion, and emitted

long-drawn sighs without knowing why, without quite understanding—stifled sighs of expectation.

The two mothers and their sister, Aunt Lison, observed the course of this youthful love with sympathetic smiles. Aunt Lison especially seemed deeply affected as she watched their movements.

She was a little woman of very few words, who always kept in the background, made no noise, put in an appearance only at meal-times, and then went upstairs again to her own room, where she remained nearly always. She had a benevolent air, a sad, sweet expression in her eyes, but she counted for little in the family.

The two sisters, who were widows, having occupied a certain position in the world, looked upon her as a rather insignificant person. They treated her with an easy familiarity which veiled their somewhat contemptuous regard for the old maid. She used to be called Lise, having been born in the days when Béranger ruled France. When it was seen that she did not marry, and that she was never likely to marry, Lise was changed into Lison. To-day she was "Aunt Lison," an unpretentious, neat old maid, very timid even with her own relatives, who were attached to her with an affection largely the result of habit, mingled with compassion and a sort of kindly indifference.

The young people never went up to her room to kiss her. The maid-servant was the only person that entered her chamber. She went to fetch Aunt Lison whenever they wanted to talk to her. It seemed as if they did not know where that room was situated—that room where in solitude all that poor life had ebbed away. They paid little attention to her. When they did not see her they never

spoke about her, never bestowed a thought on her. She was one of those retiring creatures who remain strangers even to their kinsfolk, as if they belonged to an unexplored region of humanity, whose death would cause no gap, no void in a household, one of these beings who cannot share in the existence, the habits, or the love of those who live side by side with them.

She always went about with short, quick, silent steps, never knocking against anything, and apparently imparting to inanimate objects her own noiseless attitude. Her hands appeared to be made of some kind of cotton wool, so lightly and delicately did they handle whatever they touched.

When the two words, "Aunt Lison," were mentioned, they awakened no idea in any one's mind. It was as if one had said "the coffee-pot," or "the sugar-basin."

The dog, Loute, certainly possessed a much more marked personality. She was constantly petted, and they called her "My dear Loute, my lovely Loute, my little Loute." Her loss would have been mourned much more than that of the old maid.

The marriage of the cousins was to take place at the end of May. The young couple lived in each other's eyes, their hands always clasped, with the same thoughts, the same feelings. The late, lingering spring, chilly from the white frosts at night and the cool haze that followed in the mornings, had suddenly made all things burst out into bloom.

A few warm days had awakened the sap, opened the leaves, and spread abroad the tender breath of young leaf buds and early flowers. Jeanne and Jacques, filled with unutterable bliss, but more timid than usual, remained all day sitting on a bench in

front of the house, not venturing any longer to wander very far alone, and gazing with vague glances toward the pond, a short distance away, where stately swans were pursuing each other.

As evening came on, they felt more tranquil, and after dinner they would lean out of the open window in the drawing-room, talking softly, while the two mothers were playing piquet and Aunt Lison was knitting stockings for the poor of the neighborhood.

A tall hedge extended in the distance behind the pond, and through the still scanty foliage the moon suddenly appeared. It had gradually risen and could be seen through the branches, and as it climbed the sky, amid the stars which it outshone, it shed over the earth that melancholy light in which float white vapors and dreamlike forms so dear to the tender-hearted, to poets, and to lovers.

The young people had glanced at the moon, then, tempted by the beauty of the night, they strolled slowly along, and walked across the wide stretch of moonlit sward till they came to the pond.

As soon as the ladies had finished the customary four games of piquet, they wished to retire.

"We must call in the children," said one of them.

The other cast a rapid glance toward the pale horizon, where two shadows were slowly moving along.

"Let them alone," she said; "it is such a lovely night. Lison will sit up and wait for them. Will you not, Lison?"

The old maid raised her anxious eyes, and in her timid voice replied:

"Certainly, I'll wait for them."

And the two sisters went off to bed.



Then, in her turn, Aunt Lison rose up, and, laying down her work by the side of her armchair, the wool which she had been knitting and the long needle, she went to the long window, and, standing there quietly in the opening, she looked out into the moonlight. The two lovers walked on across the grass without stopping, and kept pacing from



the pond to the doorstep, and from the doorstep to the pond. They pressed each other's fingers, without speaking, as if they were disembodied and had blended with the embodied poetry exhaled from the earth. Jeanne suddenly saw the figure of the old maid distinctly outlined by the lamplight, as if it were framed in the window.

"Why," she said, "there is Aunt Lison looking at us."

Jacques raised his head. "Yes," he answered, "Aunt Lison is looking at us."

Jacques raised his head. "Yes," he answered, "Aunt Lison is looking at us."

And they went on slowly, still in a love dream.

But the dew was falling, and the cool air made them shiver a little.

"Let us go in now," she said.

And they reëntered the house.

When they reached the parlor, Aunt Lison had

resumed her knitting. Her forehead was bent over her work, and her thin little fingers trembled slightly as if they were very tired.

Jeanne came over to her.

"Aunt, we are going to bed now."

The old maid fixed her eyes on the girl. They were red, as if she had been crying. Jacques and his future bride paid no heed to this. But the young man noticed that his sweetheart's thin shoes were quite wet. He asked anxiously, seized with uneasiness:

"Are not your dear little feet cold?"

And, all of a sudden, the aunt's fingers began to tremble so that her work slipped out of them; the ball of woollen thread rolled down on the floor, and, abruptly covering her face with her hands, the old maid began to weep with violent, convulsive sobs.

The two young people were at her side immediately.

Jeanne, falling on her knees, stretched out her arms excitedly, repeating:

"What's the matter with you, Aunt Lison? What's the matter with you, Aunt Lison?"

Then the poor old maid, in a faltering voice broken by sobs and with her face shriveled by grief, answered:

"It was—it was because he asked you, 'Are not your dear little feet cold?' No one ever said that to me! No one! No one!"





## THÉODULE SABOT'S CONFESSION



WHEN Sabot entered the inn at Martinville it was a signal for laughter. What a rogue he was, this Sabot! There was a man who did not like priests, for instance! Oh, no; oh, no! He did not spare them, the scamp!

Théodule Sabot, a master carpenter, represented liberal thought in Martinville. He was a tall, thin man, with gray, cunning eyes and thin lips, and wore his hair plastered down on his temples. When he said: "Our holy father, the Pope," in a certain manner, every one laughed. He made a point of working on Sunday during the hour of mass. He killed his pig every year on Monday in Holy Week, in order to have enough black pudding to last till Easter, and when the priest passed by he always said, by way of joke: "There goes one who has just swallowed his God off a salver."

The priest, a stout man and also very tall, dreaded him on account of his boastful talk, which attracted followers. The Abbé Maritime was a politic man, and believed in being diplomatic. There had been a rivalry between them for ten years, a secret, intense, incessant rivalry. Sabot was municipal councilor, and it was thought he would become Mayor, which would inevitably mean the final overthrow of the church.

The elections were about to take place. The church party was shaking in its shoes in Martinville.

One morning the *curé* set out for Rouen, telling his servant that he was going to see the Archbishop. He returned in two days with a joyous, triumphant air. And every one knew the following day that the chancel of the church was to be renovated. A sum of six hundred francs had been contributed by the Archbishop out of his private fund. All the old pine pews were to be removed and replaced by new pews made of oak. It would be a big carpentering job, and they talked about it that very evening in all the houses in the village.

Théodule Sabot did not laugh.

When he went through the village the following morning neighbors, friends, and enemies all asked him, jokingly:

"Are you going to do the work on the chancel of the church?"

He could find nothing to say, but he was furiously angry.

Ill-natured people added:

"It is a good piece of work, and will bring in not less than two or three per cent. profit."

Two days later they heard that the work of

renovation had been intrusted to Célestin Chambrélan, the carpenter from Percheville. Then this was denied, and it was said that all the pews in the church were to be changed. That would be well worth the two thousand francs that had been demanded of the church administration.

Théodule Sabot could not sleep for thinking about it. Never, in all the memory of man, had a country carpenter undertaken a similar piece of work. Then a rumor spread abroad that the *curé* felt very grieved that he had to give this work to a carpenter who was a stranger in the community, but that Sabot's opinions were a barrier to his being intrusted with the work.

Sabot knew it well. He called at the parsonage just as it was growing dark. The servant told him that the *curé* was at church. He went to the church.

Two attendants on the Altar of the Virgin, two sour old maids, were decorating the altar for the month of Mary, under the direction of the priest, who stood in the middle of the chancel with his portly paunch, directing the two women, who, mounted on chairs, were placing flowers around the tabernacle.

Sabot felt ill at ease in there, as if he were in the house of his greatest enemy; but the greed of gain was gnawing at his heart. He drew nearer, holding his cap in his hand and not paying any attention to the *demoiselles de la Vierge*, who remained standing, startled, astonished, motionless on their chairs.

"Good morning, Monsieur le Curé," he faltered.

The priest replied, without looking at him, all occupied as he was with the altar:



"Good morning, Monsieur Carpenter."

Sabot, nonplussed, knew not what to say next. But after a pause he remarked:

"You are making preparations?"

"Yes, we are near the month of Mary," Abbé Maritime replied.

"Why . . . why . . . " Sabot stammered, and then was silent.

He would have liked to retire now without saying anything, but a glance at the chancel held him back. He saw seats that had to be remade, eight to the right and eight to the left, the door of the sacristy occupying the place of two. Sixteen oak seats, that would be worth at most three hundred francs, and by figuring carefully one might certainly make two hundred francs on the work if one were not clumsy.

Then he stammered out:

"I have come about the work."

The *curé* appeared surprised. He asked:

"What work?"

"The work to be done," murmured Sabot, in dismay.

Then the priest turned round, and, looking him straight in the eyes, said:

"Do you mean the repairs in the chancel of my church?"

At the tone of the priest, Théodule Sabot felt a chill run down his back, and he once more had a longing to take to his heels. However, he replied humbly:

"Why, yes, Monsieur le Curé."

Then the priest folded his arms across his large stomach, and, as if filled with amazement, said:

"Is it you—you—you, Sabot—who have come

to ask me for this? You—the only irreligious man in my parish! Why, it would be a scandal, a public scandal! The Archbishop would give me a *reprimand*, perhaps transfer me.”

He stopped a few seconds for breath, and then resumed in a calmer tone:

“I can understand that it pains you to see a work of such importance intrusted to a carpenter from a neighboring parish. But I cannot do otherwise, unless—but, no—it is impossible—you would not consent, and unless you did, never!”

Sabot now looked at the row of benches in line as far as the entrance door. Christopher, if they were going to change all those!

“What would you require of me? Tell me,” he asked.

The priest replied in a firm tone:

“I must have an extraordinary token of your good intentions.”

“I do not say—I do not say; perhaps we might come to an understanding,” faltered Sabot.

“You will have to take communion publicly at high mass next Sunday,” declared the *curé*.

The carpenter felt he was growing pale, and without replying he asked:

“And the benches—are they going to be renovated?”

The priest replied with confidence:

“Yes, but later,”

Sabot resumed:

“I do not say, I do not say. I am not calling it off. I am consenting to religion, for sure. But what rubs me the wrong way is putting it in practice, but in this case I will not be refractory.”

The attendants of the Virgin, having got off

their chairs, had concealed themselves behind the altar, and they listened, pale with emotion.

The *curé*, seeing he had gained the victory, became all at once very friendly and quite familiar.

"That is good, that is good! That was wisely said, and not stupid, you understand. You will see, you will see."

Sabot smiled, and asked, with an awkward air:

"Would it not be possible to put off this communion a little while?"

But the priest replied, resuming his severe expression:

"From the moment that the work is put into your hands I want to be assured of your conversion."

Then he continued more gently:

"You will come to confession to-morrow; for I must examine you at least twice."

"Twice?" repeated Sabot.

"Yes." The priest smiled and continued: "You understand perfectly that you must have a general cleaning up, a thorough cleansing. So I shall expect you to-morrow."

The carpenter, much agitated, asked:

"Where do you do that?"

"Why—in the confessional."

"In—that box, over there in the corner? The fact is—is—that it does not suit me, your box."

"How is that?"

"Seeing that—seeing that I am not accustomed to that. And also I am rather hard of hearing."

The *curé* was very affable, and said:

"Well, then, you shall come to my house and into my parlor. We will have, just the two of us, a *tête-à-tête*. Does that suit you?"

"Yes, that is all right, that will suit me, but your box—no."

"Well, then, to-morrow, after the day's work, at six o'clock."

"That is understood; that is all right; that is agreed on. To-morrow, Monsieur le Curé. Woe to him who draws back! "

And he held out his great rough hand, which the priest grasped heartily with a clap that resounded through the church.

Théodule Sabot was not easy in his mind all the following day. He had a feeling analogous to the apprehension one experiences when a tooth has to be drawn. The thought recurred to him at every moment: "I must go to confession this evening!" And his troubled mind, the mind of an atheist only half convinced, was bewildered with a confused and overwhelming dread of the divine mystery.

As soon as he had finished his work he betook himself to the parsonage. The *curé* was waiting for him in the garden, reading his breviary as he walked along a little path. He appeared radiant, and greeted him with a good-natured laugh.

"Well, here we are! Come in, come in, Monsieur Sabot, no one will eat you."

And Sabot preceded him into the house.

"If you do not mind, I should like to get through with this little matter at once," he faltered.

The *curé* replied:

"I am at your service. I have my surplice here. One minute and I will listen to you."

The carpenter, so disturbed that he had not two ideas in his head, watched him as he put on the white vestment, with its pleated folds. The priest beckoned to him, and said:

"Kneel down on this cushion."

Sabot remained standing, ashamed of having to kneel. He stuttered:

"Is it necessary?"

But the priest became dignified.

"You cannot approach the penitent bench except on your knees."

And Sabot knelt down.

"Repeat the *Confiteor*," said the priest.

"What is that?" asked Sabot.

"The *Confiteor*! If you do not remember it, repeat after me, one by one, the words I am going to say." And the *curé* repeated the sacred prayer, in a slow tone, emphasizing the words, which the carpenter repeated after him. Then he said:

"Now, make your confession."

But Sabot was silent, not knowing where to begin.

The priest then came to his aid.

"My child, I will ask you questions, since you do not seem familiar with these things. We will take, one by one, the commandments of God. Listen to me, and do not be disturbed. Speak very frankly, and never fear that you may say too much.

"One God alone thou shalt adore  
And love Him perfectly."

"Have you ever loved anything, or anybody, as well as you love God? Have you loved Him with all your soul, all your heart, all the strength of your love?"

Sabot was perspiring with the effort of thinking. He replied:

"No. Oh, no, M'sieu le Curé. I love God as



much as I can. That is—yes—I love Him very much. To say that I do not love my children, *non*—I cannot say that. To say that if I had to choose between them and God, I could not be sure. To say that if I had to lose a hundred francs for the love of God, I could not say about that. But I love Him well, for sure; I love Him, all the same.”

The priest said gravely:

“ You must love Him more than all besides.”

And Sabot, meaning well, declared:

“ I will do what I possibly can, M’sieu le Curé.”

The priest resumed:

“ ‘God’s name in vain thou shalt not take  
Nor swear by any other thing.’ ”

“ Did you ever swear? ”

“ No! Oh, that, no! I never swear, never. Sometimes, in a moment of anger, I may say *Sacré nom de Dieu!* But, then, I never swear.”

“ That is swearing,” cried the priest, and added seriously: “ Do not do it again.

“ ‘Thy Sundays thou shalt keep  
In serving God devoutly.’ ”

“ What do you do on Sunday? ”

This time Sabot scratched his ear.

“ Why, I serve God as best I can, M’sieu le Curé. I serve him—at home. I work on Sunday.”

The *curé* interrupted him, saying magnanimously:

“ I know you will do better in future. I will pass over the following commandments, certain that you have not transgressed the two first. We will take from the sixth to the ninth. I will resume:

“Other's goods thou shalt not take,  
Nor keep what is not thine.”

“Have you ever taken, in any way, what belonged to another?”

But Théodule Sabot became indignant.

“Oh, of course not, of course not! I am an honest man, M'sieu le Curé. I swear it, for sure. To say that I have not sometimes charged for a few more hours of work to customers who had means, I could not say that. To say that I never add a few centimes to bills, only a few, I would not say that. But to steal, no! Oh, not that, no!”

The priest resumed severely:

“To take one single centime constitutes a theft. Do not do it again.”

“False witness thou shalt not bear,  
Nor lie in any way.”

“Have you ever told a lie?”

“No; as to that, no. I am not a liar. That is my quality. To say that I have never told a big story—I would not like to say that. To say that I have never made people believe things that were not true when it was to my own interest—I would not like to say that. But as for lying, I am not a liar.”

The priest simply said:

“Watch yourself more closely.” Then he continued:

“The works of the flesh thou shalt not desire,  
Except in marriage only.”

“Did you ever desire or live with any other woman than your wife?”

Sabot exclaimed with sincerity:

"As to that, no; oh, as to that, no, M'sieu le Curé. My poor wife, deceive her! No, no! Not so much as the tip of a finger, either in thought or in act. That is the truth."

They were silent a few seconds, then, in a lower tone, as if a doubt had arisen in his mind, he resumed:

"When I go to town, to say that I never go into a house—you know—one of the licensed houses, just to laugh and talk and see something different—I could not say that. But I always pay, Monsieur le Curé, I always pay. From the moment you pay no one can get you into trouble."

The *curé* did not insist, and gave him absolution.

Théodule Sabot did the work on the chancel and goes to communion every month.



## THE DONKEY



HERE was not a breath of air stirring; a heavy mist was lying over the river. It was like a layer of cotton placed on the water. The banks themselves were indistinct, hidden behind strange fogs. But day was breaking, and the hill was becoming visible. In the dawning light of day the plaster houses began to appear like white spots. Cocks were crowing in the barnyard.

On the other side of the river, hidden behind the fogs, just opposite Frette, a slight noise from time to time broke the great silence of the quiet morning. At times it was an indistinct splash, like the careful advance of a boat, then again a sharp noise like the rattle of an oar, and then the sound of something dropping in the water. Then silence.

Sometimes whispered words, coming perhaps from a distance, perhaps from quite near, pierced

through these opaque mists. They passed by like wild birds which have slept in the rushes and which fly away at the first light of day, crossing the mist and uttering a low and timid sound which wakes their brothers along the shores.

Suddenly, along the bank, near the village, a barely perceptible shadow appeared on the water; then it grew, became more distinct, and, leaving the foggy curtain which hangs over the river, a flat-boat, manned by two men, pushed up on the grass.

The one who was rowing rose and took a pailful of fish from the bottom of the boat, then he threw the dripping net over his shoulder. His companion, who had not made a motion, exclaimed: "Say, Mailloche, get your gun and see if we can't land some rabbit along the shore."

The other one answered: "All right. I'll be with you in a minute." Then he disappeared, in order to hide their catch.

The man who had stayed in the boat slowly filled his pipe and lighted it. His name was Labouise, but he was called Chicot, and was in partnership with Maillochon, commonly called Mailloche, to exercise the strange and elevating profession of scavengers.

They were a low order of sailors, and they sailed only in the months of famine. The rest of the time they acted as scavengers. Roaming around on the river day and night, watching for any prey, dead or alive, poachers on the water and nightly hunters, ambushing venison in the Saint-Germain forests, sometimes looking for drowned people and searching their clothes, picking up floating rags and empty bottles; thus did Labouise and Maillochon live easily.



At times they would set out on foot about noon and stroll along straight ahead. They would dine in some inn on the shore and leave again side by side. They would remain away for a couple of days; then one morning they would be seen rowing around in the tub which they called their boat.

At Joinville or at Nogent some boatman would be looking for his boat, which had disappeared one evening, probably stolen; while twenty or thirty miles from there, on the Oise, some shopkeeper would be rubbing his hands, congratulating himself on the bargain he had made when he bought a boat the day before for fifty francs, when two men offered it to him as they were passing.

Maillochon reappeared with his gun wrapped in rags. He was a man of forty or fifty, tall and thin, with the quick eye of people who are worried by illegitimate troubles, and of hunted animals. His open shirt showed his hairy chest, but he seemed never to have had any more hair on his face than a short brush of a mustache and a few stiff hairs under his lower lip. He was bald around the temples. When he took off the rag that he wore on his head, the skin seemed to be covered with a fluffy down, like the body of a plucked chicken.

Chicot, on the contrary, was red, fat, short, and hairy; he looked like a raw beefsteak. He continually kept his left eye closed, as if he were aiming at something or at somebody, and when people jokingly cried to him: "Open your eye, Labouise!" he would answer quietly: "Never fear, sister, I open it when there's cause to."

He had a habit of calling every one "sister," even his scavenger companion.

He took up the oars again, and once more the

boat disappeared in the heavy mist, which was now turned snowy white in the pink-tinted sky.

"What kind of lead did you take, Maillochon?" Labouise asked.

"Very small, number nine; that's the best for rabbits."

They were approaching the other shore so slowly, so quietly, that no noise betrayed them. This beach belongs to the Saint-Germain forest, and is the boundary for rabbit hunting. It is covered with burrows hidden under the roots of trees, and the beasts, at daybreak, jump around, run about, go and come.

Maillochon was kneeling in the bow, watching, his gun hidden on the floor. Suddenly he seized it, aimed, and the explosion rumbled for a long time throughout the quiet country.

Labouise, in a few strokes, touched the beach, and his companion, jumping to the ground, picked up a little gray rabbit, not yet dead.

Then the boat once more disappeared into the fog in order to get to the other side, where it could keep away from the game wardens.

The two men now seemed to be riding easily on the water. The weapon had disappeared under the board which served as a hiding place, and the rabbit was stuffed into Chicot's loose shirt.

After about a quarter of an hour Labouise asked: "Well, sister, shall we get one more?"

"Very well," Maillochon answered.

The boat started swiftly down the current. The mist, which was hiding both shores, was beginning to rise. The trees could be barely perceived, as through a veil, and the little clouds of fog were floating up from the water. When they drew near

the island the end of which is opposite Hervlay, the two men slackened their pace and began to watch. Soon a second rabbit was killed.

Then they went down until they were halfway to Conflan; here they stopped their boat, tied it to a tree, and went to sleep in the bottom of it.

From time to time Labouise would sit up and look over the horizon with his open eye. The last of the morning mist had disappeared, and the large summer sun was climbing in the blue sky.

On the other side of the river the vineyard-covered hill stretched out in a semi-circle. One house stood out alone at the summit. Everything was silent.

Something was moving slowly on the road, advancing with difficulty. It was a woman dragging a donkey. The stubborn, stiff-jointed beast occasionally stretched out a leg in answer to its companion's efforts; and it proceeded thus, with outstretched neck and ears lying flat, so slowly that one could not tell when it would ever be out of sight.

The woman, bent double, was pulling, turning around occasionally to strike the donkey with a stick.

As soon as he saw her, Labouise exclaimed: "Say, Mailloche!"

Mailloche answered: "What's the matter?"

"Want to have some fun?"

"Of course!"

"Then hurry, sister; we're going to have a laugh."

Chicot took the oars; when he had crossed the river he stopped opposite the woman and called: "Hey, sister!"

The woman stopped dragging her donkey, and looked.

Labouise continued: "What are you doing—going to the locomotive show?"

The woman made no reply. Chicot continued: "Say! your trotter's prime for a race. Where are you taking him at that speed?"

At last the woman answered: "I'm going to Macquart, at Champieux, to have him killed. He's worthless."

Labouise answered: "You're right. How much do you think Macquart will give you for him?"

The woman wiped her forehead on the back of her hand and hesitated, saying: "How do I know? Perhaps three francs, perhaps four!"

Chicot exclaimed: "I'll give you five francs, and your errand's done! How's that?"

The woman considered the matter for a second, and then exclaimed: "Done!"

The two men landed. Labouise grasped the animal by the bridle. Maillochon asked in surprise: "What do you expect to do with that?"

Chicot this time opened his other eye in order to express his gayety. His whole red face was grinning with joy; he chuckled: "Don't worry, sister. I've got my idea."

He gave five francs to the woman, who then sat down by the road to see what was going to happen. Then Labouise, in great humor, got the gun and held it out to Maillochon, saying: "Each one in turn; we're going after big game, sister. Don't get so near, or you'll kill it right away! You must make the pleasure last a little."

He placed his companion about forty paces from the victim. The ass, feeling itself free, was trying

to get a little of the tall grass, but it was so exhausted that it swayed on its legs as if it were about to fall.

Maillochon aimed slowly, and said: "A little pepper for the ears; watch Chicot!" And he fired.

The tiny shot struck the donkey's long ears, and he began to shake them in order to get rid of the stinging sensation. The two men were doubled up with laughter and stamping their feet with joy. The woman, indignant, rushed forward; she did not want her donkey to be tortured, and she offered to return the five francs. Labouise threatened her with a thrashing, and pretended to roll up his sleeves. He had paid, hadn't he? Well, then; he would take a shot at her skirts, just to show that it didn't hurt. She went away, threatening to call the police. They could hear her protesting indignantly and cursing as she went her way.

Maillochon held out the gun to his comrade, saying: "It's your turn, Chicot."

Labouise aimed and fired. The ass received the charge in his thighs, but the shot was so small and came from such a distance that he thought he was being stung by flies, for he began to thrash himself with his tail.

Labouise sat down to laugh more comfortably, while Maillochon reloaded the weapon, so happy that he seemed to sneeze into the barrel. He stepped forward a few paces, and, aiming at the same place that his friend had shot at, he fired again. This time the beast started, tried to kick, and turned its head. At last a little blood was running. It had been deeply wounded, and felt a sharp pain, for it tried to run away with a slow, limping gallop.



Both men sprang after the beast, Maillochon with a long stride, Labouise with the short, panting trot of a little man. But the ass, tired out, had stopped, and, with a bewildered look, was watching his two murderers approach. Suddenly he stretched his neck and began to bray.

Labouise, out of breath, had taken the gun. This time he walked right up close, as he did not wish to begin the chase over again.

When the poor beast had finished its mournful cry, like a last call for help, the man called: "Hey, Mailloche! Come here, sister; I'm going to give him some medicine." And while the other man was forcing the animal's mouth open, Chicot stuck the barrel of his gun down its throat, as if he were trying to make it drink a potion; then he said: "Look out, sister, here she goes!"

He pressed the trigger. The donkey stumbled back a few steps, fell down, tried to get up again, and finally lay on its side and closed its eyes. The whole body was trembling, its legs were kicking as if it were trying to run. A stream of blood was oozing through its teeth. Soon it stopped moving. It was dead.

The two men went along, laughing; it had been over too quickly; they had not had their money's worth. Maillochon asked: "Well, what are we going to do now?"

Labouise answered: "Don't worry, sister; get the thing on the boat; we're going to have some fun when night comes."

They went and got the boat. The animal's body was placed on the bottom, covered with fresh grass, and the two men stretched out on it and went to sleep.

Toward noon Labouise drew a bottle of wine, some bread and butter, and raw onions from a hiding place in their muddy, worm-eaten boat, and they began to eat.

When the meal was over they once more stretched out on the dead donkey and slept. At nightfall Labouise awoke and shook his comrade, who was snoring like a buzz-saw. "Come on, sister," he ordered.

Maillochon began to row. As they had plenty of time they went up the Seine slowly. They glided along the beaches covered with water-lilies, and the heavy, mud-colored boat slipped over the pads and bent the flowers, which stood up again as soon as they had paddled along.

When they reached the wall of the Eperon, which separates the Saint-Germain forest from the Maisons-Laffitte Park, Labouise stopped his companion and explained his idea to him; Maillochon was moved by a prolonged, silent laugh.

They threw into the water the grass which had covered the body, took the animal by the feet, and hid it behind some bushes. Then they got into their boat again and went to Maisons-Laffitte.

The night was perfectly black when they reached the wine shop of old man Jules. As soon as the dealer saw them he came up, shook hands with them, and sat down at their table. They began to talk of one thing and another. By eleven o'clock the last customer had left, and old man Jules winked at Labouise and asked: "Well, have you got any?"

Labouise made a motion with his head, and answered: "Perhaps so, perhaps not!"

The dealer insisted: "Perhaps you've got nothing but gray ones?"

Chicot dug his hands into his flannel shirt, drew out the ears of a rabbit, and declared: "Three francs a pair!"

Then began a long discussion about the price. Two francs sixty-five, and the two rabbits were delivered. As the two men were arising old man Jules, who had been watching them, exclaimed: "You have something else, but you won't say what."

Labouise answered: "Perhaps, but it is not for you; you're too stingy."

The man, growing eager, kept asking: "What is it? Something big? Perhaps you might strike a bargain."

Labouise, who seemed perplexed, pretended to consult Maillochon with a glance; then he answered in a slow voice: "This is how it is. We were in the bushes at Eperon when something passed right near us, to the left, at the end of the wall. Mailloche takes a shot, and it drops. We skipped on account of the game people. I can't tell you what it is, because I don't know. But it's big enough. But what is it? If I told you I'd be lying, and you know, sister, between us everything's aboveboard."

Anxiously the man asked: "Think it's venison?"

Labouise answered: "Might be, and then again it might not! Venison?—uh! uh! . . . might be a little big for that! Mind you, I don't say it is, because it mightn't be!"

Still the dealer insisted: "Perhaps it's a buck?"

Labouise stretched out his hand, exclaiming: "No, it's not that! It's not a buck. I should have seen the horns. No, it's not a buck!"

“ Why didn’t you bring it with you? ” asked the man.

“ Because, sister, from now on I sell from where I stand. Plenty of people will buy. All you have to do is to take a walk over there, find the thing, and take it. No risk for me.”

The innkeeper, growing suspicious, exclaimed: “ Supposing he wasn’t there! ”

Labouise once more raised his hand and said: “ He’s there, I swear!—first bush to the left. What it is I don’t know. But it’s not a buck, I’m positive. It’s for you to find out what it is. Twenty-five francs cash down! ”

Still the man hesitated: “ Couldn’t you bring it? ”

Maillochon exclaimed: “ No, indeed! You know our price! Take it or leave it! ”

The dealer decided: “ It’s a bargain for twenty francs! ”

And they shook hands over the deal.

Then he took our four big five-franc pieces from the cash drawer, and the two friends pocketed the money. Labouise arose, emptied his glass, and left; as he was disappearing in the shadows he turned around to exclaim: “ It isn’t a buck. I don’t know what it is! . . . but it’s there. I’ll give you back your money if you find nothing! ”

And he disappeared in the darkness. Maillochon, who was following him, kept punching him in the back as a testimony of his joy.



## THE ODYSSEY OF AN OUTCAST



THE remembrance of that evening can never be blotted out. For half an hour I had the sinister feeling of an invincible fate; I felt the shudder that one experiences in going down into a mine. I touched the black abyss of human misery; I understood how impossible an honest life is for some persons.

It was past midnight. I was returning from the Vaudeville to the Rue Drouot, walking rapidly along the boulevard, where umbrellas were hurrying to and fro. A fine, powdery rain was flying, rather than falling, dimming the gaslights and giving the street a melancholy appearance. The pavement glistened and was more sticky than wet. People hurried along, paying no attention to anything.

Women, with their skirts raised, showing their



white stockings, stood in doorways trying to attract passers-by, or else, brushing past them, would whisper some stupid words in their ear. They would follow a man, sidling up to him, their putrid breath blowing in his face; then, finding their words were in vain, they would leave him abruptly and in anger, and resume their course, swinging their hips.

I walked along, appealed to on all sides, taken by the sleeve, tormented and filled with disgust. All at once I saw three of them running, as if they were mad, and exchanging rapid remarks. Then others began to run, to flee, holding their dresses up with both hands so that they could run better. The dragnet was out that evening for that class of women.

Suddenly I felt some one take my arm, while a distracted voice murmured in my ear: "Save me, sir, save me; do not leave me."

I looked at the girl. She was not twenty, although she was quite faded. I said to her:

"Stay with me."

"Oh, thank you," she murmured.

We reached the line of republican guards. They made an opening to let me pass.

I turned into the Rue Drouot. My companion asked me:

"Are you coming home with me?"

"No."

"Why not? You did me a kindness that I can never forget."

"Because I am married," I replied, in order to get rid of her.

"What do I care?"

"Come, my child, that will do. I helped you out of a difficulty. Let me alone now."

The street was dark and deserted, sinister, in

fact. And this woman who was squeezing my arm only intensified the feeling of sadness that pervaded me. She wanted to kiss me. I recoiled in horror, and said in a hard tone:

"Come, let me alone, do you hear?"

She made an angry gesture, and then suddenly began to sob. I was dismayed, moved, without understanding.

"Come, what ails you?"

She murmured amid her tears:

"If you knew; it is not cheerful, you may be sure."

"What?"

"This life."

"Why did you choose it?"

"Was it my fault?"

"Whose fault was it, then?"

"I know!"

A kind of interest was aroused in me by this wretched creature.

"Tell me your history," I said.

And she told it.

"I was sixteen, and was in service at Yvetot, with Monsieur Lerable, a grain merchant. My parents were dead. I had no relatives. I saw that my master looked at me in a queer manner, and pinched my cheeks, but I paid no attention to him. I knew about things, of course; in the country people are shrewd. But Monsieur Lerable was a pious old fellow who went to mass every Sunday. I would never have suspected him, in fact.

"One day he tried to take advantage of me in the kitchen, but I resisted him, and he went off.

"Opposite us was a grocer, Monsieur Dutan, who had a boy in the store who was very pleasant;

so much so that I let him talk me over. I left the door open and he came to see me in the evening.

"But one night Monsieur Lerable heard a noise and came upstairs. He found Antoine, and wanted to kill him. They fought with chairs, with water pitchers, with everything. I seized some clothes and rushed into the street. And I was off.

"I was terrified, as terrified as a hare. I put on my wraps in a doorway, and then I started to walk straight ahead of me. I was sure that some one was killed and that the police were already looking for me. I took the highroad to Rouen. I thought I could hide myself very well in Rouen.

"It was so dark that I could not see the ditches, and I heard the dogs barking on the farms. No one knows all the sounds one hears at night. Birds who scream like men whose throats are being cut, creatures that hiss, and lots of things that one cannot understand. It made my flesh creep, and at each sound I made the sign of the cross. You cannot imagine how it makes your heart beat. When day began to dawn the thought of the gendarmes took possession of me again, and I began to run. Then I quieted down.

"I felt hungry, although I was so upset; but I had nothing, not a sou. I had forgotten my money, all that I had in the world, eighteen francs. So I walked along with an empty stomach. It was warm. The sun burned me. Noon passed. I was still walking.

"All at once I heard horses behind me. I turned round. The gendarmes! My blood stopped circulating; I thought I was going to fall. But I controlled myself. They came up with me. They looked at me. One of them, the oldest, said:

“ ‘ Good morning, Mamzelle.’

“ ‘ Good morning, sir.’

“ ‘ Where are you going like that? ’

“ ‘ I am going to Rouen to service in a place that was offered me.’

“ ‘ What! on foot? ’

“ ‘ Yes, just as I am.’

“ My heart beat, sir, so that I could not speak any more. I said to myself: ‘ They’ve caught me.’ And my legs twitched with a longing to run away. But they would have caught me at once, you understand.

“ The older man said:

“ ‘ We will go along together as far as Barantin, Mamzelle, seeing that we both take the same road.’

“ ‘ With pleasure, sir.’

“ And we began to chat. I made myself as agreeable as I could, naturally; so much so that they surmised things that were not true. But when we were passing a wood the older man said:

“ ‘ Would you like to go and sit down on the moss to rest, Mamzelle? ’

“ Without thinking, I replied:

“ ‘ If you wish it, sir.’

“ He dismounted and gave his horse to the other to hold, and we went into the wood together.

“ I could say nothing. What would you have done in my place? After some time he said: ‘ We must not forget my comrade.’ And he went back to hold the horses. I was so ashamed that I could have cried. But I did not dare to be obstinate. You understand.

“ So we set off again. I did not speak, my heart was too sad. And I could not walk any longer, I was so hungry. In a village they gave me a glass

of wine, which gave me strength for a little while. And then they began to trot their horses so that we should not be seen together in going through Barantin. Then I sat down by the side of the road and cried all the tears I had.

“ I walked three hours longer before reaching Rouen. It was seven in the evening when I got there. At first all the lights bewildered me. And I had no place to sit down. On the highroad there is the ditch, and grass where one could even lie down and go to sleep. But in towns there is nothing.

“ My legs seemed to be driven into my body and I was so dizzy that I thought I should fall. Then it began to rain, a little fine rain, like this evening, which looks like nothing, but penetrates you. I have no luck when it rains. Well, I began to walk about the streets. I looked at all the houses, saying to myself:

“ ‘ There are so many beds and so much bread in there, and I cannot even find a crust and a straw mattress.’ I chose the streets where there were women calling to men passing by. In such cases, Monsieur, one has to do what one can. I did as they did, inviting every one, but without any luck. I wished I was dead. This lasted till midnight. At last a man listened to me. He said: ‘ Where do you live?’ One becomes cunning when it is necessary, and I replied: ‘ I cannot take you to my house, for I live with my mother.’

“ He reflected a while, and then said: ‘ Come along, I know a quiet place.’

“ He took me across a bridge and then to the end of the town to a meadow beside the river. I was too tired to go any farther.



"He made me sit down, and we began to talk. But he talked so long that I fell asleep. He went off without giving me anything. It was raining, as I said. And from that day I have pains that I cannot get rid of, for I slept all that night in the mud.

"I was awakened by two police officers, who took me to the station house, and from there to prison, where I stayed a week, while they were looking up my record. I would tell nothing, for fear of the consequences. They found out, however, and set me at liberty after acquitting me. I had now to begin looking for something to eat again. I tried to get a place as a servant, but did not succeed, as I had been in prison.

"Then I recalled an old Judge who had glanced at me after the fashion of old Lerable, of Yvetot, while he was hearing my case. I went to see him. I was not mistaken. He gave me a hundred sous when I left, and said: 'You shall have the same every time; but do not come oftener than twice a week.'

"I understood that, as he was old. But it made me think. I said to myself: 'Young people amuse themselves, but they are not coarse. But old men are different.' I understood them now, the old apes, with their grooved eyes and their little wizened heads.

"Do you know what I did, Monsieur? I dressed myself like a nursemaid coming from market, and I walked about the streets looking for my nurslings. Oh, I caught them at the first throw. I said: 'Here is one who will bite.' He approached. He began:

"'Good morning, Mamzelle.'

“ ‘ Good morning, sir.’

“ ‘ Where are you going like that?’

“ ‘ I am going home to my masters.’

“ ‘ Do they live far off, your masters?’

“ ‘ Oh, so-so.’

“ Then he did not know what more to say. I slackened my pace in order to let him explain himself.

“ Then he paid me some compliments in a low tone and asked me to go home with him. I kept him begging me, you understand, and then I yielded. I had others like him in the morning, and all my afternoons free. That was the good time of my life. I did not have to worry.

“ But, there! One is never quiet for any length of time. As ill-luck would have it, I made the acquaintance of rich old society man, a former Judge, who was at least seventy-five.

“ One evening he took me to dine at a restaurant in the suburbs. And then, you understand, he could not restrain himself. He died during dessert.

“ I had three months of prison, for I was not under inspection.

“ It was then that I came to Paris. Oh, it is hard living here, Monsieur. One does not eat every day. There are too many. Well, it cannot be helped; all have their own troubles, have they not? ”

She was silent. I walked along beside her, my heart aching. All at once she began to call me “ thou.”

“ Well, then, dear, you will not come home with me? ”

“ No; I told you so already.”

“ Well, then, good-by; thank you, all the same, without any grudge. But I assure you, you are making a mistake.”

And she left me, and was soon out of sight in the misty rain. I saw her pass beneath a gas-lamp, and then disappear in the shadow. Poor girl!



## BOMBARD



IMON BOMBARD frequently found life very trying. He was born with an incredible aptitude for idleness and an immoderate desire to avoid thwarting this tendency. Every moral or physical exertion, anything in the nature of work, seemed to him to be too great an effort for his strength. As soon as any serious topic was touched on his attention wandered, his mind being incapable of any strain or even any attention.

His father had a notion store at Caen, and the son had taken life easy, as his family said, until he was twenty-five.

But his parents were always nearer failing than making a fortune, and he suffered dreadfully from lack of money.

He was a big, handsome fellow, with red whiskers cut in the Norman fashion, with a florid complexion, blue eyes with a happy, stupid expression, and already beginning to have a corporation, and dressed himself with the loud elegance of a provincial in holiday attire. He laughed, vociferated, gesticulated at everything that was said, displaying his boisterous good humor with the assurance of a traveling man. He considered that life was meant solely for joking and buffoonery, and as soon as he had to restrain his noisy mirth he fell into a condition of stupid sleepiness, not being capable of sadness.

His lack of money worried him, and he was in the habit of repeating a saying that became known to all his friends:

"If I had ten thousand francs a year I would be an executioner."

Every year he spent two weeks at Trouville, and called that "spending the season." He stayed with his cousins, who let him have a room, and from the day of his arrival to the day of his departure he walked up and down the board walk along the beach.

He walked with a firm step, his hands in his pockets or behind his back, always wearing roomy clothes, light waistcoats, and loud neckties, with his hat on one side and a penny cigar in the corner of his mouth.

He passed close beside well-dressed women, looking at the men with the air of a young fellow ready to pick a quarrel, and seeking—seeking—for he was seeking something.



He was seeking a wife, trusting to his face and physique to win him favor. He had said to himself:

"The devil! I can certainly find what I want among the crowds that come here." And he sought it with the instinct of a shooting dog, the instinct of a Norman, positive that at first sight he could recognize the woman who would make his fortune.

It was one Monday morning, and he was saying to himself:

"Why—why—why!"

The weather was superb, one of those blue and yellow days in July when it seems to be raining down heat. The immense beach was covered with people in elegant toilets and bright colors, and looked like a garden. The fishing smacks with their brown sails, almost motionless on the blue water in which they were reflected, seemed to be sleeping beneath the morning sun, some quite close to the wooden wharf, others farther off, and some far in the distance, as if overcome by the indolence of a summer day, and too indifferent to go out to sea or even to come into the harbor. And yonder, in a mist, one could perceive the coast of Havre with two white elevations at its highest point, the light-houses of St. Adresse.

"Why—why—why!" he had said, on meeting her for the third time, and feeling that her glance was directed on him, the glance of a mature woman of the world, who sought an acquaintance.

He had noticed her on the previous days, for she also seemed to be looking for some one. She was an Englishwoman, quite tall and rather thin, the bold Englishwoman whom travel and circumstances have rendered mannish. However, she was not bad-

looking, walked with a short, decisive step, dressed plainly and neatly, but her headgear was peculiar, as their headgear always is. She had rather handsome eyes, high cheekbones, rather too red, and long teeth, which she always displayed.

When he reached the dock he turned round and walked back again to see if he would meet her once more. He did so, and she looked at him as much as to say:

"Here I am."

But how could she speak to him?

He walked back again for the fifth time, and as they approached face to face she let fall her umbrella. He darted forward, picked it up, and handed it to her, saying:

"Allow me, Madame——"

"*Aôh*, you are very kind," she replied, in poor French. And they looked at one another. They knew not what to say. She was blushing. Suddenly, gathering courage, he said:

"What beautiful weather this is."

"*Aôh*, delicious!" she murmured.

And they stood there facing each other, embarrassed, but not thinking, either of them, of moving away. It was she who had the courage to inquire:

"Are you going to be here long?"

"Oh, yes; as long as I wish," he replied. Then, abruptly, he said:

"Would you like to walk to the pier? It is so pretty on a day like this."

"I should like it," she answered simply.

And they walked along side by side, she with her short, decisive step, and he with his swinging gait, like a strutting turkey.

Three months later the prominent merchants of Caen received, one morning, a large white wedding announcement:

"Monsieur and Madame Prosper Bombard have the honor to inform you of the marriage of their son, Simon Bombard, to Madame Kate Robinson, widow."

And on the other side:

"Madame Kate Robinson, widow, has the honor to inform you of her marriage to Monsieur Simon Bombard."

They settled in Paris. The bride's fortune was fifteen thousand francs a year, free from incumbrance. Simon wanted four hundred francs a month for his personal expenses. He had to show by his affection that he deserved this, and he had no difficulty in proving it and obtaining his wish.

All went smoothly at first. Madame Bombard was certainly not young, and had lost much of her freshness; but she had a way of exacting things which made it impossible to refuse her. She would say, with her English accent:

"Oh, Simon, now we must go to bed," and Simon would start toward the bed like a dog who is ordered "To your kennel." And she knew how to get her way on every occasion.

She never got angry, never made scenes, never screamed; she never looked cross or hurt, or even sulky. She simply knew how to say a thing, that was all. And she always spoke to the point, in a tone that admitted of no reply.

More than once Simon was about to demur; but he always ended by yielding to the decisive and imperious wishes of this singular woman. However,

as his married life seemed rather monotonous, and as he had enough money to amuse himself with, he lost no opportunity of doing so, but had to be very cautious.

Madame Bombard perceived his infidelity, without his surmising in what manner, and she announced, one evening, that she had hired a house in Mantes, where they would reside in future.

His existence became less bearable. He tried to amuse himself in a variety of ways, but they were not as satisfactory as making conquests of women. He went fishing, knew how to distinguish between the places frequented by gudgeon, by carp, or by roach; the favorite haunts of bream, and the various baits that tempted the different fish. But as he watched his float bobbing in the water his mind was on other things.

He became friendly with the head of the office of the sub-prefecture and with the captain of gendarmes, and they played whist in the evening at the Café de Commerce, but his mind's eye saw the queen of clubs or the queen of diamonds, while his mind became muddled at the thought of these figures with heads but no nether extremities.

Then he thought of a scheme, the veritable scheme of a cunning Norman. He got his wife to hire a maid that he chose, not a pretty, dressy coquette, but a strong, red-faced girl who would not awaken suspicion and whom he had prepared to carry out his plans. She was recommended to them privately by the director of customs, a complaisant friend who was in the plot and vouchsafed for her in every particular. Madame Bombard, suspecting nothing, accepted the treasure that was sent to her.

Simon was happy, but cautiously happy, with some fear, and with incredible difficulties to contend with. He could not escape his wife's anxious watchfulness except for a few moments now and then, and was always uneasy. He sought some ruse, some stratagem, and finally discovered one that was perfectly successful.

Madame Bombard, who had nothing to occupy her, retired early, and Bombard, who played whist at the Café du Commerce, always came home precisely at half-past nine. He had arranged for Victorine to wait for him in the dark in the hallway of the house, on the steps of the vestibule. When at the end of a few minutes, the girl retired to her attic with a gold piece in her hand, Bombard laughed in triumph, repeating aloud like the barber of King Midas as he was fishing for bleak-fish among the reeds in the river:

“ Fooled this time, missus.”

And the pleasure of fooling Madame Bombard was worth to him all that was lacking in his matrimonial arrangements.

Now, one evening Victorine was waiting for him as usual on the steps, but she seemed more lively, more animated than usual, and they remained together about ten minutes in the hall. When he entered the bedroom Madame Bombard was not there. A cold chill ran down his back, and he sank into a chair, tortured with anxiety.

Just then she appeared, a candlestick in her hand.

“ Did you go out? ” he said tremblingly.

“ I went to the kitchen to get a glass of water,” she replied calmly.

He endeavored to allay whatever suspicions she



might have, but she seemed quiet, happy, and trusting, and he was reassured.

The following morning when they went into the dining-room to breakfast Victorine was putting the cutlets on the table. When she was moving away from the table Madame Bombard held out a gold piece to her with the tips of her fingers, and said in her calm, serious tone of voice:

“Here, my girl, here is twenty francs that I deprived you of last night. I am returning it to you.”

And the astonished maid took the gold piece, which she gazed at in stupid amazement, while Bombard, terrified, stared at his wife with round, wide-open eyes.



## MADemoiselle COCOTTE



WE were just leaving the asylum when I saw a tall thin man in a corner of the court who was obstinately pretending to call an imaginary dog. He was crying in a soft, tender voice: "Cocotte! Come here, Cocotte, my beauty!" and slapping his thigh as one does when calling an animal. I asked the physician: "Who is that man?" He answered: "Oh! he is not at all interesting . . . he is a coachman named François, who became insane after drowning his dog."

I insisted: "Tell me his story. The most simple and humble things are sometimes those which touch our hearts most deeply."

Here is this man's adventure, which was obtained from a friend of his, a groom:

There was a family of rich *bourgeois* who lived in a suburb of Paris. They had a villa in the middle of a park, at the edge of the

Seine. Their coachman was this François, a country fellow, a little heavy, kind-hearted, simple, and easy to deceive.

One evening, as he was returning home, a dog began to follow him. At first he paid no attention to it, but the creature's obstinacy at last made him turn around. He looked to see if he knew this dog. No, he had never seen it. It was a nursing female, and frightfully thin. She was trotting behind him with a mournful and famished look, her tail between her legs, her ears flattened against her head, and stopping and starting whenever he did.

He tried to chase this skeleton away, and cried: "Run along! Get out! kss! kss!" She retreated a few steps, then sat down and waited! And when the coachman started to walk again she followed along behind him.

He pretended to pick up some stone. The animal ran a little farther away, but came back again as soon as the man's back was turned.

Then the coachman François took pity on the beast and called her. The dog approached timidly. The man patted her protruding ribs, moved by the beast's misery, and he cried: "Come! come here!" Immediately she began to wag her tail, and, feeling herself taken in, adopted, she began to run along ahead of her new master.

He made her a bed on the straw in the stable, then he ran to the kitchen for some bread. When she had eaten all she could she curled up and went to sleep.

When the masters heard of this the next day they allowed the coachman to keep the animal. It was a good beast, caressing and faithful, intelligent and gentle.

But soon they saw that she had a terrible fault. She was in love from one year's end to another. In a very short while she had made the acquaintance of all the dogs in the neighborhood, who immediately began to roam around her day and night. She distributed her favors to them with absolute impartiality, seeming to be on the best of terms with them all, dragging behind her a regular pack, composed of the most varied types of the barking race, some as large as the fist, others the size of donkeys. She trotted them along all the roads on endless journeys, and when she would stop to rest on the grass they would make a circle about her and watch her with their tongues hanging out.

The people of the neighborhood looked upon her as a phenomenon; they had never seen anything like it. The veterinary was at a loss. At night, when she would return to the stable, the crowd of dogs would besiege the estate. They would slip in through every break in the hedge, trample down the plots, pull up the flowers, dig holes in the ground, and generally exasperate the gardener, and they would howl all night, gathered around the building where their friend lay; and nothing could persuade them to leave.

During the daytime they would even go into the house. It was an invasion, a play, a disaster. At all moments the masters would find on the stairs and even in their rooms little yellow terriers, pointers, bulldogs, mangy curs, enormous Newfoundlands, which frightened the children.

Then, all over the countryside, people began to see unknown dogs who had come from they knew not where, living no one knew how, and who had then disappeared again.

Nevertheless, François adored Cocotte, and he kept repeating: "That beast is human. She only lacks speech."

He had a magnificent red leather collar made for her which bore these words engraved on a copper plate: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, belonging to the coachman François."

She had become enormous. She was now as fat as she had been thin. She had grown stout all of a sudden, and now walked with difficulty, like human beings who are too obese, and she would pant as soon as she would start to run.

She showed an extraordinary fertility; four times a year she would give birth to a batch of little animals belonging to every variety of the canine race. François would pick out one which he would leave her, and then he would unmercifully throw the others into the river. But soon the cook joined her complaints to those of the gardener. She would find dogs under the stove, in the ice box, in the coal bin, and they would steal everything they came across.

The master impatiently ordered François to get rid of Cocotte. In despair, the man tried to give her away. Nobody wanted her. Then he decided to lose her, and he gave her to a teamster, who was to drop her on the other side of Paris, near Joinville-le-Pont.

Cocotte returned the same day. Some decision had to be taken. Five francs was given to a train conductor to take her to Havre. He was to drop her there.

Three days later she returned to the stable, scratched up, harassed, and tired out.

The master took pity on her and let her stay.



But the other dogs soon returned, more numerous than ever. And one evening, when a big dinner party was on, a stuffed turkey was carried away by a dog right under the cook's nose; and she did not dare to stop him.

This time the master completely lost his temper, and angrily told François: "If you don't throw this beast into the water before to-morrow morning, I'll put you out, do you hear?"

The man was dumfounded, and he returned to his room to pack his trunk, preferring to leave the place. Then he bethought himself that he could find no other place as long as he dragged this animal behind him; he thought of the good position, where he was well paid and well fed, and he decided that a dog was really not worth all that; at last he took the decision to rid himself of Cocotte at daybreak.

He slept badly. He rose at dawn, seized a strong rope, and went to get the dog. She stood up slowly, shook herself, stretched, and came to her master.

Then his courage forsook him, and he began to kiss her tenderly, petting her and calling her tender names.

But a neighboring clock struck six. He could no longer hesitate. He opened the door, calling: "Come!" The beast wagged her tail, understanding that she was to be taken out.

They reached the beach, and he chose a place where the water seemed deep. Then he knotted the rope around the leather collar and tied a heavy stone to the other end. He seized Cocotte in his arms and kissed her madly, as though he were taking leave of some human being. He held her to his breast, rocked her, and called her "my dear little

Cocotte, my sweet little Cocotte," and she grunted with pleasure.

Ten times he tried to throw her into the water, and each time he lost courage.

But suddenly he took his decision, and he threw her as far from him as he could. At first she tried to swim, as she did when he gave her a bath, but her head, dragged down by the stone, kept going under; and she looked at her master with wild, human glances as she struggled like a drowning person. Then the front part of her body sank, while her hind legs waved wildly out of the water; finally those also disappeared.

Then, for five minutes, bubbles rose to the surface as though the river were boiling; and François, haggard, his heart beating, thought that he saw Cocotte struggling in the mud; and, with the simplicity of a peasant, he kept saying to himself: "What's the poor beast thinking of me now?"

He almost lost his mind; he was sick for a month, and every night he dreamed of his dog; he could feel her licking his hands and hear her barking. It was necessary to call in a physician. At last he recovered, and toward the end of June his masters took him to their estate at Biessard, near Rouen.

There again he was near the Seine. He began to take baths. Each morning he would go down with the groom, and they would swim across the river.

One day, as they were disporting themselves in the water, François suddenly cried to his companion: "Look what's coming! I'm going to give you a chop!"

It was an enormous, swollen corpse that was

floating down with its feet sticking straight up in the air.

François swam up to it, still joking: "Whew! it's not fresh. What a catch, old man! It isn't thin, either!" He kept swimming around at a distance from the stupefying beast. Then suddenly he was silent and looked at it strangely; this time he came near enough to touch it. He looked fixedly at the collar, then he stretched out his arm, seized the neck, twisted the corpse around, and drew it up close to him and read on the copper, which had turned green and which still stuck to the discolored leather: "Mademoiselle Cocotte, belonging to the coachman François."

The dead dog had come more than a hundred miles to find its master!

He let out a frightful shriek, and began to swim for the beach with all his might, still howling; and as soon as he touched land he ran away wildly, stark naked, through the country. He was insane!



## THE TRESS



HE walls of the cell were bare and white-washed. This clear yet gloomy room was lighted by a narrow, barred little window, placed so high that nobody could reach it; and the madman, sitting on a cane-bottomed chair, watched us with a fixed, vague, haunted stare. He was strikingly thin, with hollow cheeks and hair that was almost white, which, one could see, had become so within the last few months. His clothes appeared to be too large for his withered limbs, his shrunken chest, his hollow stomach. One could see that this man was devoured by his thoughts, by a Thought, just as a piece of fruit is gnawed by a worm. His madness, his idea, was there, in his head, persistent, harrowing, devouring. Little by little it was consuming the body. It, the Invisible, the Impalpable, the Intangible, the Immaterial Idea, was rotting the flesh, drinking the blood, extinguishing life.

What a mystery was this man, killed by a dream! This Possessed One was pitiful and terrifying to see! What strange, horrible and mortal vision dwelt behind that brow, which he kept continually wrinking?

The physician said: "He has terrible fits of anger; he is one of the strangest lunatics that I ever have seen. He is suffering from a dismal and erotic insanity. He has written a journal which clearly shows us the disease of his mind. His madness is, so to speak, palpable. If the matter interests you, you may look over the document." I followed the doctor into his office and he gave me the diary of this miserable man, saying: "Read this, and tell me what you think of it."

This is the contents of this journal:

"Until the age of thirty-two I lived quietly, without love. Life appeared to me very simple, very good, and very calm. I was rich. I appreciated so many things that I could have a decided taste for nothing. It is so good to live! I awoke every morning, ready to do the things that pleased me, and I would go to bed at night with the anticipation of a peaceful to-morrow and a future without worry.

"I had had a few sweethearts, without ever having felt my heart maddened with desire or my soul bruised with love after possession. It is good to live thus. It is better to love, but it is terrible. Those who love in the ordinary manner may feel an ardent happiness, less violent than mine, perhaps, for love came to me in an incredible manner.

"As I was rich, I collected ancient furniture and antiques. I often thought of the unknown hands that had touched these things, of the eyes



that had admired them, and the hearts that had loved them—for such things can inspire love. Often have I sat for hours at a time looking at a little watch of the last century. It was so neat and dainty, with its gold and enamel embossing. And it still ran, just as on the day when some woman had bought it and felt delighted at the possession of such a jewel. It had not ceased to beat, to live its mechanical life, but, although a whole century had rolled by, it continued its regular tick-tack. Who first had worn it on her breast, in the warmth of her dress, with the heart of the watch beating against the heart of the woman? What hand had held it at the ends of its warm fingers and then wiped the enameled shepherds, a little tarnished by the moisture of the skin? What eyes had looked down at this flowered dial, awaiting the hour, the dear, divine hour?

“How I wished that I might see and know the woman who had chosen this rare and exquisite jewel! But she is dead! My desires are for women of former times, and I love all those who have loved long ago. The story of past tenderness fills my heart with regrets. Oh! the beauty, the smiles, the caresses of youth! Such things should be eternal!

“How many times have I wept all night over the women of old, so tender, sweet, and beautiful, whose lips have opened to the kiss, and who have now gone forever! The kiss is immortal! It passes from lip to lip, from generation to generation, from age to age! Men take it, give it, and die.

“The past attracts me, the present frightens me, because the future is death. I regret all that which is gone; I weep for all those who have lived; I should like to stop time, to arrest the hour. But

it goes on, and on, and on; second by second it takes a little something from me for the mystery of tomorrow. And I never shall live again!

"Farewell, women of yesterday! I love you!

"But I am not to be pitied. I found her—the one for whom I have been waiting; and through her I have experienced wonderful delights.

"I was wandering around Paris one sunny morning, with joy in my soul and a springy step, looking into the shops with a vague interest. Suddenly, in an antiquarian's, I noticed a piece of Italian furniture of the seventeenth century. It was very beautiful and very rare. I attributed it to an Italian artist named Vitelli, who was quite famous at about that period. Then I passed on.

"Why did the memory of that piece of furniture pursue me with such force that I retraced my steps? I stopped again before the shop to look at it again, and I felt strongly tempted to buy it.

"What a strange thing is temptation! You look at something, and little by little it attracts you, haunts you, and takes possession of you like a woman's face. Its charm penetrates you, a strange fascination which comes from the form, color, and general appearance of the thing; and you love, desire, and wish for it already. An increasingly imperious need for possession overcomes you. And the merchants seem to suspect the secret and growing desire by the envious look of the eye.

"I bought this piece of furniture and had it immediately brought to my house. I placed it in my room.

"Oh, how I pity those who do not know this honeymoon of the collector and his newest purchase. He caresses it with his eye and hand, just as if it

were made of flesh and blood; he is continually returning to it, and he thinks of it wherever he may be going, whatever he may be doing. The sweet remembrance of it follows him into the street, everywhere that he goes; and when he returns home, before even taking off his gloves and his hat, he rushes to it and looks at it with the tenderness of a lover.

"Really, for a week I adored this piece of furniture. I was all the time opening its doors and its drawers; I handled it with delight, enjoying all the intimate delights of possession.

"Well, one evening, I felt the thickness of a panel, and I decided that there must be a secret receptacle there. My heart began to beat, and I spent the night looking vainly for the secret.

"I succeeded on the following day by inserting the blade of a knife in a crack in the wood. A board slid forward, and I saw, against a background of black velvet, a tress of wonderfully beautiful woman's hair!

"Yes, hair; a long tress of blond hair, almost red, which seemed to have been cut close to the skin and bound together with a gold cord.

"I stood stock still, trembling, moved, surprised! An almost imperceptible perfume, so ancient that it seemed to be the soul of a smell, escaped from this mysterious drawer and from this surprising relic.

"I took it gently, almost religiously, and drew it from its hiding-place. Immediately it uncoiled itself, and hung down to the ground in a golden cascade, thick and light, supple and shiny, like the tail of a comet.

"A strange emotion seized me. What was this? When? How? Why had this hair been secreted

in this receptacle? What adventure, what tragedy did this memory hide?

“Who had cut it? A lover on a day of farewell? A husband on a day of vengeance? Or else the one who had worn it on a day of despair?”

“Had this been done upon her entrance into a convent; and was it then that this fortune of love had been thrown here as a testimony to the world of the living? Was it just as death had snatched away this young and beautiful woman that the one who loved her had kept the crowning glory of her head, the only thing of hers that he could keep, the only living part of her body that would not rot, the only thing that he could still caress and love and kiss in his frenzies of sorrow?”

“Was it not strange that this tress should still be there, when not a speck of her body remained?”

“It was wound around my fingers, and it tickled my skin with a strange caress, the caress of a dead woman. I felt moved, almost on the verge of tears.

“I held it in my hands for a long time; then it seemed to affect me as if something of the soul had remained hidden in it. I placed it back on the faded velvet, and I pushed back the drawer, closed the door and went out in the street to dream.

“I walked straight on ahead of me, filled with sadness, and also moved by the restlessness which fills your soul after a kiss from a woman whom you love. I felt as if I had already lived in an age gone by, as if I had known this woman.

“When I returned home I felt an irresistible desire to see my strange treasure again; I took it again, and when I touched it I felt a thrill come over me.

“For a few days, however, I remained in my

normal state of mind, although the thought of this tress did not leave me.

"As soon as I went home I had to handle it and see it. I would turn the key in the cupboard with that trembling which often comes over one on opening the door of a sweetheart, for in my heart and hand I felt a confused, strange, continuous, sensual desire to play with this charming river of dead hair.

"Then, when I had finished caressing it and when I had locked it up again in the cupboard, I could still feel it there, as if it had been a living being, hidden and captive; I felt it and still desired it; I would feel the imperious need of taking it again and of handling it until I grew weak from this cold, slippery, irritating, maddening, delightful contact.

"I lived in this manner for a month, or maybe two, I do not know exactly. It obsessed me, haunted me. I was happy and tortured, as in the anticipation of love, as after the avowals that precede the embrace.

"I would lock myself up with it alone, in order to feel it on my skin, to bury my lips in it, to kiss and bite it. I would wind it about my face and bury my eyes in its golden stream, so as to be able to see the world blond through it.

"I loved it! Yes, I loved it! I could not be without it for an hour. And I was waiting . . . waiting. . . . What for? I do not know. Perhaps for. . . . Her.

"One night I awoke suddenly with the thought that I was no longer alone in my room.

"Yet I was alone. But I was unable to get to sleep again; and, as I was tossing about in fever-



ish insomnia, I rose in order to touch the tress. It seemed to me to be softer, more animated than usual. Do the dead return to earth? The kisses with which I covered it filled me with joy; and I carried it back into bed with me, pressing it to my lips, just as one would do to a sweetheart.

"The dead return! She came back. Yes, I saw her, I held her in my arms, just as she had been when she was alive, tall, blond, plump, and I covered with caresses the whole divine figure.

"Every night I saw her. Yes, She, the Dead, the Adorable One, the Mysterious, the Unknown, returned to me every night.

"My happiness was so great that I was unable to conceal it. When I was with her I felt a super-human delight, the profound, inexplicable joy of possessing the Immaterial, the Invisible, the Dead! No lover ever tasted more ardent or more terrible delights!

"I could not hide my happiness. I loved her so passionately that I could not leave her. I carried her with me everywhere. I took her through the town as if she had been my wife; I brought her to the theater, in concealed boxes, as if she had been my mistress. But people saw . . . guessed . . . and took her from me. . . . And I was thrown into prison, like a criminal. She has been taken from me. . . . Oh, woe! . . ."

The manuscript stopped there. Suddenly, as I raised my bewildered eyes to the physician, a wild scream, a shriek of powerless rage and exasperated desire, rang through the asylum.

"Listen to him," said the doctor. "We are forced to douche this wretched lunatic five times a

day. Sergeant Bertrand is not the only man who ever loved dead women."

Dazed with astonishment, horror, and pity, I questioned: "But what about this tress? . . . Does it really exist?"

The physician stood up and opened a cupboard full of flasks and instruments, and tossed to me a long braid of blond hair which flew toward me like a golden bird.

I trembled as I felt on my hands its light and caressing touch. My heart beat with disgust and envy—disgust at the contact with an object connected with a crime, envy, as before the temptation of an infamous and mysterious thing.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders and muttered: "The imagination of man is capable of everything!"



## FATHER BONIFACE'S CRIME



As he was leaving the post office that day the postman, Boniface, noticed that his round would be shorter than usual, and as a result he felt a lively joy. His route lay in the country around the town of Vireville, and sometimes when he returned in the evening with his long, tired stride, he had accomplished more than twenty miles.

But to-day the work would be light; he might even be able to loaf a little on the way and reach home by three o'clock. What luck!

He left the town by the path that leads to Senne-mare, and began his duties. It was June, the month of green leaves and flowers.

He wore a blue blouse and a black cap with a red stripe, and he followed narrow paths through fields of colza, oats, or wheat, which rose to the height of his shoulders; and his head, rising above the stalks, seemed to float on a calm green sea, rippling under a gentle breeze.

He passed through the wooden gate shaded by two rows of trees, and greeting the peasant by name: "Good morning, Maître Chicot," he handed him his newspaper, *Le Petit Normand*. The farmer wiped his hand on the seat of his trousers, took the paper, and stuck it into his pocket, to read it at his ease after the midday meal. The dog, straining at the chain which held him fast to the barrel, barked furiously, while the man set off again without turning round, his left hand on his letter-bag, and his right swinging his heavy cane.

Boniface distributed his packages and letters in the hamlet of Sennemare; then he set off across the fields to carry the mail to the schoolmaster, who lived in an isolated little house about one mile from the town.

He was the new teacher, M. Chapatis, who had arrived the week before, and who was newly married. He received a newspaper from Paris, and sometimes, when he had time, the postman would glance through it before delivering it to its owner.

Well, this day he opened his bag, took out the sheet, slipped it out of its wrapper, unfolded it, and began to read as he walked along. The first page did not interest him much; politics left him unmoved; he always skipped over the financial column, but the news of the day always absorbed his attention.

There were many things of interest that day. He was so impressed by the story of a crime which had been committed in the lodge of a game-warden that he stopped short in the middle of a clover patch to read it over again slowly. A woodcutter, while passing before the house, had noticed a little blood on the threshold, as if somebody had had nose-

bleed. "The warden must have killed some rabbit last night," he thought; but as he drew nearer he noticed that the door was ajar and that the lock had been broken.

Then, overcome with fear, he ran to the village to tell the Mayor, who took along the sheriff and the schoolmaster as reënforcements, and the four men returned together. They found the warden dead on his own hearth, his wife strangled under the bed, and their little six-year-old girl smothered between two mattresses.

The postman Boniface was so moved by the thought of this murder, all the details of which appeared to him in succession, that he felt his knees grow weak, and he exclaimed aloud: "Good heavens! there certainly are some scoundrels in this world!"

Then he slipped the paper back into its wrapper and went on his way, his head buzzing with the details of the crime. Soon he reached the dwelling of M. Chapatis; he opened the gate to the little garden and approached the house. It was a low building containing only a ground floor and a garret. It was at least five hundred meters distant from the nearest house.

The postman mounted the two steps to the porch, placed his hand on the knob, tried to open the door, and noticed that it was locked. Then he saw that the blinds had not been opened and that nobody had left the house that day.

Uneasiness filled him, for, ever since his arrival, M. Chapatis had been an early riser. Boniface drew his watch. It was only ten minutes past seven; he was, therefore, almost one hour ahead of time. Nevertheless, the schoolmaster should have been up.



Then he walked cautiously around the house as if he were running some danger. Excepting for some footprints in a strawberry patch, he noticed nothing suspicious.

But suddenly he stood stock still as he reached one of the windows, dumb with fright. Somebody within the house was moaning.

He went closer, stepped over a patch of thyme, and pressed his ear against the house in order better to hear; undoubtedly somebody was moaning. He could plainly hear long painful sighs, a kind of gasp, the sound of a struggle. Then the moans became stronger, more frequent, and finally changed to screams.

Boniface, no longer doubting that a crime was being committed there that very minute, rushed away at full speed across the garden, through the fields and crops, out of breath, his bag flapping against his sides; he arrived, gasping and bewildered, at the door of the police station.

The sergeant, Malautour, was mending a chair with tacks and a hammer. The gendarme, Rautier, was steadying the piece of furniture between his knees, and holding a tack at the edge of the break; then the sergeant, his eyes fixed on the spot, would accurately hammer the fingers of his subordinate.

As soon as the postman saw them, he cried out: "Come along, quick! The schoolmaster is being murdered! Quick, quick!"

The two men stopped their work and raised their heads with the astonished look of men who are surprised and interrupted.

Boniface, seeing them more bewildered than excited, repeated: "Quick, quick! The robbers are

in the house; I heard the cries; we'll be just in time! "

The sergeant placed his hammer on the ground and asked: " Who informed you of the fact? "

The postman continued: " I was taking him his paper and a few letters when I noticed that the door was locked and that the teacher was not yet up. I walked around the house to find out what might be the matter, and I heard a moan, as if somebody had been strangled or had had his throat cut; then I ran back here as fast as I could to get you. We've just got time! "

The sergeant stood up and asked: " And you did not lend your personal aid? "

The bewildered postman answered: " I was afraid that I alone would not be enough. "

By this time the official was convinced, and he said: " Give me time to get on my uniform and I am with you. "

He went into the building, followed by his soldier, who was carrying the chair. He reappeared almost immediately and the three men started off at double-quick time.

As they came near the house they slowed down by precaution, and the sergeant drew his revolver; then they carefully entered the garden and approached the wall. There were no new traces to show that the robbers had left. The door and the windows were still tightly closed.

" We've got them now, " muttered the sergeant.

Father Boniface, trembling with emotion, brought them around to the other side of the house, and showed them a shed. " That is the place, " he said.

The sergeant advanced all alone and glued his

ear to the door. The others stood by, watching his every moment, prepared for anything.

He stood motionless for a long time, listening. In order better to be able to approach his head to the wall, he had taken off his three-cornered hat and was holding it in his right hand.

What did he hear? His impassive countenance revealed nothing; but suddenly his mustache began to bristle, his cheeks wrinkled as for a silent laugh, and, again stepping over the patch of thyme, he came toward the two men, who were watching him in bewilderment.

Then he motioned to them to follow him on tip-toe; and when they were near the front door, he motioned to Boniface to slip the mail through the crack.

The astonished postman obeyed.

"And now, let's be on our way," he said.

As soon as they were outside the gate he turned around to the letter carrier and with a bantering air and a merry look he exclaimed: "You are a wise one, you are!"

The old man asked: "What? I heard it; I swear I heard it!"

But the gendarme, unable to stand the strain any longer, burst out laughing. He was almost choking, his hands to his sides, bent double, tears in his eyes, and making frightful faces. The other two men looked on in astonishment.

But, as he could neither speak nor stop laughing, nor make the others understand what might be the matter with him, he made a popular and vulgar sign.

As they did not understand, he repeated it several times and pointed to the house at the same

time. His subordinate suddenly understood and burst out into a fit of boisterous laughter.

The old man stood stupidly between the two amused men.

Finally the sergeant calmed down, and, giving the old man a poke in the stomach, he exclaimed: "Oh! You old joker! I'll remember Father Boniface's crime!"

The postman looked at him with eyes as large as saucers, and kept repeating: "I swear that I heard it!"

The sergeant began to laugh again. His soldier was sitting by the roadside in order better to laugh.

"So! You heard! And is that the way that you murder your wife, hey?"

"My wife?"

He thought for a long time and then he continued: "My wife. . . . Yes, she bawls when I lick her. . . . But when she bawls, she bawls. Was Monsieur Chapatis beating his?"

Then the sergeant, in a delirium of joy, twisted him about, and whispered something in his ear at which the other remained speechless from astonishment.

Then the old man thoughtfully murmured: "No . . . not like that . . . not like that . . . mine says nothing. . . . Who would have thought it possible? . . . I could have sworn that it was a murder. . . ."

And, confused, bewildered, and ashamed, he went on his way, while the gendarme and the sergeant still called coarse jokes to him as they watched his black cap disappear through the calm ocean of crops.